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Victorian and confucian womanhood viewed by western women missionaries annie baird, ellasue wagner, jean perry, and lillias underwood

Cha, Eun-Hee

Awarding institution:
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**VICTORIAN AND CONFUCIAN WOMANHOOD VIEWED BY
WESTERN WOMEN MISSIONARIES
ANNIE BAIRD, ELLASUE WAGNER, JEAN PERRY, AND LILLIAS
UNDERWOOD**

**BY
EUN-HEE CHA**

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School of Art & Humanities

King's College London

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ABSTRACT

This thesis considers Victorian and (Korean) Confucian domestic womanhood in the narratives and writings of western female missionaries, in particular Annie Baird (1864-1916), Ellasue Wagner (1881-1957), Jean Perry (1863-1935) and Lillias Underwood (1851-1921). In the missionary project *Woman's Work for Woman*, which was aimed at bringing Korean womanhood to emancipation and 'modernity', western female missionaries and Korean women met in a cultural encounter in which they shared the common experience of 'separate' spheres based on gender. For both groups, the ideal place and proper role for women was at home, as opposed to men's role in the public realm. Yet despite the gender restraints of Victorian domestic womanhood on western female missionaries and of Confucian domestic womanhood on Korean women, both sides were enriched and challenged by this encounter: far from home and exposed to the challenges of a new country, the westerners were able to break through some of their boundaries, while the Korean women conveyed to the missionaries their own sense of independent womanhood, which did not always conform to Confucian values.

However, these changes are not always reflected in the major narratives of the female missionaries. Often, the Korean Confucian women's agency is not recognized clearly, while the alteration in the western women seems to be missing entirely. Yet this absence itself is revealing, pointing to the paradox of the encounter between western and Korean womanhood: the western women missionaries fought against the Confucian abasement of women without seeking any betterment of their own standing as female missionaries within the context of the ideal of Victorian sanctified womanhood; while strong Korean women fought for equal rights, but without considering themselves as agents of a purely indigenous effort.

In highlighting the critical factors that contributed to the transformation of each group of women as a result of their cultural encounter, this thesis aims to fill a critical research gap, by exploring what has so far been hidden or ignored. These aspects include the Korean Confucian women's agency in evangelical work, linked with their strong economic status; and the changes brought about in the female missionaries through their encounter with the Korean women, along with the personal challenges and new experiences they faced in the mission field, circumstances that could not be accounted for within the western Victorian model of womanhood.

Despite the ‘restrained’ image of western female missionaries in the narratives, and the apparent lack of critical reflection, this thesis argues that in their cultural encounter, both female missionaries and Korean women acted as agents of influence and change within a wider context that needs to be looked at from socio-cultural, post-colonial and feminist angles.

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Introduction

The arrival of Protestant Christianity in Korea in the late 19th and early 20th century, and in particular the missionary project Woman's Work for Woman, led to a cultural encounter between western female missionaries and indigenous Korean Confucian women. The evangelical work of the western female missionaries was geared towards the emancipation of Korean women, and contributed significantly to bringing Korean womanhood to modernity.

The female missionaries who came to Korea at that time were by no means a minority compared with their male counterparts, and their achievements in the country, especially among Korean women, represented a major religious landmark. Statistics show that among US Presbyterian missionaries to Korea in the period 1884-1934, there were 294 women, both married and single, and 175 men.¹ As Americans were a majority among all foreign missionaries who served in Korea, it is reasonable to assume that these numbers give an indication of the general picture.²

The extensive participation of women in foreign mission was a new and notable phenomenon. The female missionaries were charged with the task of providing an example of Christian womanhood, working through the framework of Woman's Work for Woman to transform 'heathen households into Christian homes' by raising 'the heathen' women to the status they presumably held in Christian countries.³ It was expected that in their mission they would work mainly among the women of the recipient country, with an emphasis on 'the conversion of mothers', which was consonant with the 'Victorian Sanctification of motherhood'.⁴ The model of femininity exemplified by these evangelical women was based

¹ US Presbyterian Missionaries to Korea: 1884-1934

	Male	Female
Married: Arrived Together	126	126
Arrived Single/Separately	49	168
Total	175	294

See Elizabeth Underwood, *Challenged Identities: North American Missionaries In Korea, 1884-1934* (Seoul: 2004), 87.

² The total number of Protestant missionaries in Korea over the period 1884-1945 has been estimated at around 1,529, of which Americans accounted for 1,059 (69.3%), with the rest from countries such as Britain, Canada, and Australia. The Americans were mainly from the Presbyterian Church, North and South, and the Episcopal Methodist Church, North and South. See *Naehan Seongyosa Chongram* [A General Survey on Missionaries in Korea], compiled by Kim Sung Tae and Park Hae Jin (Seoul: Korean Church History Institute, 1994), 4.

³ Dana Robert, *American Women in Mission: A Social History of their Thought and Practice* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1996), 133.

⁴ Patricia Hill, *World Their Household: The American Woman's Foreign Mission Movement and Cultural Transformation, 1870-1920* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1985), 58.

firmly on the Victorian domestic ideal and its attributes, with great value placed on the virtues of 'purity, piety, domesticity and submissiveness.'⁵

In fact, the domestic values and attributes of the Victorian ideal of womanhood had much in common with Korean women's Confucian ideal of domestic womanhood.⁶ While the former was based on a Christian Victorian model, the other was founded in Confucian tradition, and both of these existed within a dominant patriarchal culture. Yet despite this limitation, the female missionaries' Woman's Work for Woman project seems to have contributed to the emancipation of both groups, changing both female missionaries and Korean women. Both sides were enriched and challenged by this encounter as, far from home and exposed to the challenges of a new country, the westerners were able to break free of some of their boundaries, while the Korean women conveyed to the missionaries their own sense of independent womanhood, which did not always conform to Confucian values.

Nevertheless, it is striking that most of the narratives and literature written by the female missionaries concerning their (cultural) encounter with Korean women and efforts towards their emancipation seem to ignore the alteration process experienced by the western women themselves. Similarly, the Choson Korean Confucian women's contribution and leadership in working towards their own emancipation, especially their agency in evangelical work, seem also to have been overlooked.

Indeed, within the asymmetrical relationship between the Korean women in what westerners perceived as the 'pre-modern' society of Choson, and the female missionaries from 'modern' Anglo-America, intent on emancipating them, the western women seem not to have identified their own alteration process, and often failed to pay attention to Korean women's participation in working towards their own emancipation, and their active leadership in evangelical work.

Given their lack of self-reflection, it seems that the female missionaries brought about changes in their lives and status almost involuntarily, or at least inadvertently, as a reaction to their work in Korea. In this regard, the cultural encounter between the female

⁵ Barbara Welter, 'The Cult of True Womanhood', *American Quarterly* 18 (Summer, 1966): 151-74; see also Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: 'Women's Sphere' in New England, 1780-1835* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977). Cott argues that middle-class women in the nineteenth century formulated the women's sphere in domesticity as a response to industrial, capital, economic and social changes.

⁶ See Hyaewool Choi, *Gender and Mission Encounters in Korea: New Women, Old Ways* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 2009), 84.

missionaries and Korean Confucian women was seen by the westerners as leading to change only for the Korean women.

According to Homi Bhabha's theory of the 'third space,' such a one-sided process of alteration is not an authentic encounter. His notion of 'cultural translation,' in which 'culture' is not fixed, is 'never pre-given,' but is like a fluid web without fixed boundary or border, is one in which 'all forms of cultures are in some way related to each other, because culture is a signifying or symbolic activity.'⁷ In this sense, 'in order to objectify cultural meaning, there always has to be a process of alienation and of secondariness in relation to itself'.⁸ He argues that 'the act of cultural translation (both as representation and as reproduction) denies the essentialism of a prior given original or originary culture,' and that 'all forms of culture are continually in a process of *hybridity*.'⁹ This process takes place within a 'third space,' which 'displaces the histories that constitute it, and sets up new structures of authority, new political initiatives, which are inadequately understood through received wisdom... The process of cultural hybridity gives rise to something different, something new and unrecognisable, a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation.'¹⁰

With regard to the cultural encounter between western female missionaries and Korean women as delineated in the missionary narratives, however, Bhabha's 'third space' is notable chiefly by its absence. The reason seems to be the stark asymmetry in power between the two sides. While Bhabha acknowledges a conservative 'mindset' that keeps referring a new situation to some pre-given principle, and may result in only a 'reactionary reflex' rather than a true alteration,¹¹ he seems to have given less consideration to the significance of power imbalance or difference, as it is questionable whether the marginal group (here Korean women) really have an opportunity to set up new structures of authority.¹² Indeed, in the encounter considered here, the result has been considered primarily in terms of the change in Korean women, while there are apparently very few

⁷ 'The Third Space': Interview with Homi Bhabha, in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990), 209-210.

⁸ *Ibid.* 210.

⁹ *Ibid.* 211.

¹⁰ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 211.

¹¹ See *Identity*, 216.

¹² In precondition, the marginal group is to have 'equal chance to articulate their interests as do the powerful representatives', but once they enter 'the third space', often their voices are not heard or are ignored. See Britta Kalscheuer, 'Encounters in the Third Space: Links Between Intercultural Communication Theories and Postcolonial Approaches', in *Communicating in the Third Space*, Karin Ikas and Gerhard Wagner (eds.) (New York, NY: Routledge, 2009), 39; see also Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' in Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (eds.), *Marxism and Interpretation of Culture* (London, 1988), 271-316.

changes on the side of the western women, despite their work for Korean female emancipation.

The Korean women are identified exclusively as 'receiver,' while the western female missionaries are identified only as 'giver.' It seems that the participation of Korean women in working towards their own emancipation, and their active leadership in evangelical work, has been undervalued and under-researched, and the women themselves considered as no more than assistants to the western female missionaries. Meanwhile, it seems that any alteration brought about in the western women, whether directly or indirectly, and to however small a degree, has received no acknowledgement whatsoever.

Such a one-sided representation might have to do in part with the writers' perception of the 'elevated status of Western women' as modern,¹³ and their tendency to overlook the agency exercised by non-Christian women, often considering the indigenous cultures as non-modern or primitive in comparison with their own.

Indeed, when female missionaries first travelled to Korea to take part in missionary work around the late nineteenth century, the prevalent view on the concept of 'modernity' was quite western-Eurocentric. It was generally believed that non-western lands, such as Korea, were primitive societies, and that modernity could be achieved in those societies only through influence from the modern West, with no influence exerted in the other direction.

However, this 'one-direction' approach to cultural encounter has since been subject to critique, as shown by Huntington's statement that 'the West [is] Unique, Not Universal.'¹⁴ Moreover, according to another view on 'modernity,'¹⁵ the societies of Eastern Asia, for example Confucian Korea, were not 'primitive' as westerners have often assumed. Indeed, more recently scholars have argued that there ought to be a re-examination of Korean Confucian society, including the social position of Korean women, to find out whether it

¹³ Jane Hunter, *The Gospel of Gentility: American Women Missionaries in Turn-of-the-Century China* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1984), xv.

¹⁴ The idea that western-Eurocentric modernity is the sole model (standard) of modernity has been questioned. Samuel P. Huntington responded to the critique of his work, *Clash of Civilization*, by stating that the West is unique, not universal. (Samuel P. Huntington, 'The West Unique, Not Universal', *Foreign Affairs* (Nov.-Dec. 1996), 28-46.

¹⁵ Exploring 'modernity' with the particular patterns that have been developed within each civilization, questioning what circumstances or what conditions have led each modernity in a certain direction, has led to the introduction of the idea of 'multiple modernities'. For example, Shmuel N. Eisenstadt and Robert N. Bellah perceive modernity from multiple civilizational perspectives with diverse origins, in each case leading to particular and unique forms of modernity, which goes against the long-established belief 'that the cultural program of modernity as it developed in modern Europe and the basic institutional constellations that emerged there would ultimately take over in all modernizing and modern societies'. Shmuel N. Eisenstadt (ed.), *Multiple Modernism* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 2002); also see Robert N. Bellah, *Religion in Human Evolution: From the Paleolithic to the Axial Age* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011).

might accord with the idea of an alternative ‘modernity.’¹⁶ If so, this would contradict the prevalent assumption that western Christian women were the sole examples of elevated and ‘modern’ womanhood.

In this light, this thesis explores how Korean Confucian women can be considered as agents, and not just as objects of the western women’s mission work in what the missionaries considered a ‘primitive’ society. Only then might it be possible to discern the impact of the Korean women, however small, on the western women and their transformation, aspects that have often been hidden. Therefore, looking into the existence of a number of Choson Korean Confucian women of independent mind, and at the property rights of Choson Korean women, which were relatively strong in comparison to the position of western (married) women (see Chapter 4), will be critical input, revealing the agency of Choson Korean women, the very people considered as ‘recipients’ of mission. Only then will the alteration brought about in western women, which may have been in part a response to the Korean women’s agency, be revealed, thus completing the picture of the cultural encounter between western women and Korean women, an encounter that resulted in changes on both sides.

Against this backdrop, this thesis explores the western women missionaries’ main narratives, along with other contemporary mission-related writings produced around the late 19th and early 20th century, excavating where necessary seemingly hidden or overlooked accounts to provide a better picture of what the authentic cultural encounter was like. If that cultural encounter is to be considered an authentic one, taking place in what Bhabha termed the third space and invalidating the hierarchical view regarding the different cultures, then we should be able to recognize alteration not just on the part of the Korean woman, but also among the western women missionaries. This may imply that the Korean women themselves influenced the western women missionaries, however small that influence might have been. Therefore, it is necessary to identify Korean women’s own contribution to the work of emancipation and evangelizing within the Woman’s Work for Woman project. We should be able to see them acting as agent, and not just passive object. At the same time, we will look for alteration on the part of the western women missionaries that might have been

¹⁶ See Miasimahiroshi [宮島博史], *Inmun Chungchaek Forum* [Humanities Policy Forum], vol.4 (2010.3) 24-27. Indeed, Milan Hejtmanek, in his article ‘Rationalism and “Modernity” in the State Examination System of Choson Korea: an Analysis of *Munkwa* Examination Rosters, 1545-1720’ explores the Choson government exam data between the years 1545 and 1720, and finds Choson’s bureaucratic system to be ‘substantially rational and in accord with “modern” techniques of selection and promotion to high position’ (see Milan Hejtmanek, *Jungbuhak Yeongu* [Government Science Research], vol.19 (2013): 41-67.

brought about by their cultural encounter with Korean Confucian women, a part of the picture that seems to be missing from the missionaries' own narratives.

In view of the above, the main research question is: In the cultural encounter that took place as a result of the mission work Woman's Work for Woman in Korea around the late 19th and early 20th century, what changes were brought about in the western female missionaries and in the Korean Confucian women? With regard to the Korean women, the focus will be on their agency and how this was manifested, while with regard to the western women, the focus will be on what form their alteration took. In order to answer these questions, the research will proceed as follows:

First, in order to understand the background of the cultural encounter between western female missionaries and Choson Korean Confucian women, Chapter One of this thesis will explore the historical and theological context in which the female missionaries were working, and give biographical details of the main female missionary authors. Chapter Two will explain the missionaries' concept of womanhood, which was rooted in the ideal of Victorian womanhood; the Choson Korean ideal of Confucian womanhood; and the comparative status of women in Confucian and Victorian society.

Chapter Three will provide a picture of what the cultural encounter between the female missionaries and Choson Korean women was like, and examine what changes were brought about in each group as a result of that encounter. In particular, the chapter will identify the impact on the Korean Confucian women and their womanhood made by their conversion to Christianity, as seen in the literary narratives of Annie Baird, Ellasue Wagner, Jean Perry, and Lillias Underwood.

Chapter Four will investigate a range of influences on the social standing of Korean women, including not just the female missionaries and their work, but also Korean male elites and Korean women themselves. It will show how the credit for Korean women's emancipation should go chiefly to the Choson women themselves, especially in view of their economic impact as they exercised their right to property and took a leading role in financial matters; and given their active participation in and contribution to evangelical work.

Chapter Five will analyse the main missionary narratives, paying particular attention to the representations of strong Korean Confucian women and of female missionaries seen as the archetypal 'Victorian Lady,' in each case making reference to the corresponding ideals of Confucian and Victorian womanhood, and making comparisons where appropriate. In particular, the chapter will consider the role of the 'yangban' Korean Confucian women as a possible model for positive change for equality and women's rights in Choson Korea.

Chapter Six will focus on the question of whether, in their encounter with Korean women and the work of emancipation, the western women missionaries themselves experienced any changes, especially in their idea of womanhood. This aspect tends to be absent from the missionary narratives, as they seem to have considered themselves always as ‘giver’ rather than ‘receiver’ or ‘co-worker’ in Woman’s Work for Woman. However, the western women faced great personal challenges in the mission field, and underwent experiences well beyond the Victorian ideal. The chapter will explore the transformation brought about by their encounter with Choson Korean indigenous women and their mission work of emancipation, looking in detail at how such change was manifested for each of the female missionary authors considered in this thesis.

Literature Review

Most studies of the early days of Christian mission in Korea have tended to look more closely at the work of male missionaries, and even the very small body of research dedicated to female missionaries¹⁷ has centred mainly on the nature and achievements of their work. This approach is exemplified by Korean male Church historians such as L. George Paik¹⁸ and Min Kyung Bae.¹⁹ Paik’s accounts focus primarily on the activities and achievements of male missionaries known as pioneers of Korean mission, such as Horace Underwood (1859-1916) and Henry Appenzeller (1858-1902). In what is supposed to be a comprehensive account of Korean Church history, descriptions of women’s mission work take up no more than ten out of a total of 445 pages. There is a brief summary of Mrs Scranton’s achievements in setting up a school for Korean women, but no reference to the contribution of other female missionaries to the Ewah girls’ school, let alone any details as to the names of Korean women or girls or their own contribution to the mission work.

There is a marked lack of research into the cultural encounter between the western female missionaries and Korean women, so that this area remains relatively underexplored. The

¹⁷ See Kang Sunmi, *Hankukui Keundai Chogi Feminism Yeongu [Study on the Rise of Feminist Consciousness at the Turn of the 20th Century in Korea]* (Seoul: Pureunsasangsa, 2005); Kim Eunha, ‘The independent missionaries Jean Perry and Ellen Pash’s education activities in 1890-1910’ *教育問題研究 [The Journal of Research in Education]*, vol.37 (2010), 1-21; Park Jong Hyun, ‘The birth of the modern Christian women in Korea, centering on Ellasue Wagner, the Methodist female missionary’, *Hankuk Gyohoi Sahakhoiji* [Korean Church History Society Papers], vol.20 (2007), 95-122; Yoon Jeong Ran, ‘The Desire of American Women Visiting Choson’s “Ahnbang (Women’s room)” in the Late 19th Century: Focused on Woman Missionary Lillias Horton Underwood’, *Sarim [The Historical Journal]*, vol.34, (2009), 105-134.

¹⁸ L. George Paik, *The History of Protestant Missions in Korea, 1832-1910* (Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 1971, 2nd ed. Originally published in Pyeng Yang: Union Christian College Press, 1929).

¹⁹ Min Kyung Bae, *Hankuk Gyohyoisa [The History of the Korean Christian Church]*, (Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 2004), 2nd version.

historian Donald N. Clark, in his work, *Living Dangerously in Korea: The Western Experience 1900-1950*,²⁰ considers the role of Korean Bible women, who offer critical help, acting as ‘major sources of cultural information for the [women] missionaries’(173). However, he does not show Korean women as having agency, working on their own initiative, but rather as assistants to the western women missionaries. Elizabeth Underwood, in her *Challenged Identities: North American Missionaries in Korea*,²¹ explores the cultural encounter between Americans and Korean people and culture in the period from 1884 to 1934, showing how the American missionaries in Korea changed in terms of their cultural and personal identities. She is less interested in the changes brought about in the Koreans as ‘recipients’ of mission, perhaps because she is working from a particular perspective as a descendent of American missionaries. Also, her work is not specified in gender, although she mentions that she incorporates gendered identities throughout the text.

Two works in particular have taken a specifically female perspective, looking at the cultural encounter between western female missionaries and non-Christian women in the late 19th and early 20th century. Jane Hunter’s *The Gospel of Gentility: American Women Missionaries in Turn-of-the-Century China*,²² and Patricia Hill’s *The World Their Household: The American Woman’s Foreign Mission Movement and Cultural Transformation, 1870-1920*²³ examine how the women’s foreign missionary movement appealed to the domestic piety, religious devotion and social service that characterized the Victorian woman’s sphere. However, while both works emphasize the contributions and historical agency of women missionaries, their accounts reveal unexplored academic spaces, especially with regard to the ‘relations between missionaries and the minority groups they targeted for their work’, and to the responses of ‘the recipients’ of the mission work.²⁴ The same is true of Katherine H. Lee Ahn’s *Awakening the Hermit Kingdom: Pioneer American Women Missionaries in Korea*,²⁵ a collection of American women missionaries’ lives and works in Korea from 1884 to 1907 that says very little about the relations between

²⁰ Donald N. Clark, *Living Dangerously in Korea: The Western Experience 1900-1950* (Norwalk, CT: East Bridge Press, 2003), 169-187.

²¹ Elizabeth Underwood, *Challenged Identities: North American Missionaries in Korea* (Seoul: Royal Asiatic Society, 2004).

²² Jane Hunter, *The Gospel of Gentility: American Women Missionaries in Turn-of-the-Century China* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1984).

²³ Patricia Hill, *The World Their Household*.

²⁴ Requoted from Noriko Kawamura Ishii’s *Western Women Missionaries at Kobe College, 1873-1909* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 6.

²⁵ Katherine H. Lee Ahn, *Awakening the Hermit Kingdom: Pioneer American Women Missionaries in Korea*, (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2009).

missionaries and their targeted groups. Analysing ‘the scope of the impact that the American women missionaries left’, Ahn discusses their evangelical work, drawing out the changes in Korean women upon conversion and their active responses to mission, and noting that ‘a number of Korean Bible women were found and trained through the Bible classes and became a great force for the rapid evangelization of Korea.’²⁶ However, Ahn does not give much attention to the role of Korean women as historical agency, or to the relations between the western women missionaries and Korean women converts. Rather, her focus is on the western women missionaries and the way in which they ‘paved many new trails of life and work’ through their mission work in Korea, acting as agents, not just as ‘assistants to the male pioneer.’²⁷

There has been some scholarly work on the Korean woman as agent. For example, Chang Sung Jin, in her thesis entitled ‘Korean Bible Women: Their Vital Contribution to Korean Protestantism, 1894-1945,’²⁸ considers the Korean Bible woman as historical agent, as active evangelist and as leader of Church and society, who ‘contributed remarkably to early Korean Protestant mission and the development of Korean Protestant churches.’²⁹ Countering the prevalent assumption that the Protestant American women missionaries were the major contributor to formulate Korean Protestantism, especially through Woman’s Work for Woman, Chang emphasizes the agency and vital contribution of Korean (Bible) women. However, Chang does not give much attention to the relationship between the western women missionaries and Korean women, and in her focus on the Korean Bible women she perhaps underestimates the achievements of the missionaries.

Complementing Chang’s work, Hyaeweol Choi, in her *Gender and Mission Encounters in Korea: New Women, Old Ways*,³⁰ challenges the simple framework that credits Protestant women missionaries as bringing about ‘modern’ Korean womanhood. Choi explores the cultural encounter between the western women and Korean women, ‘critiquing the reified image of the west and male-dominated historiography of modern Korea.’³¹ Singling out three different agent groups that had roles in shaping Korean ‘modern’ womanhood, namely the American Protestant missionaries (both men and women), Korean male elites, and

²⁶ *Ibid.* 205.

²⁷ *Ibid.* 306.

²⁸ Chang Sung Jin, ‘Korean Bible Women: Their Vital Contribution to Korean Protestantism, 1894-1945’ (Ph.D. Thesis. University of Edinburgh, 2005).

²⁹ *Ibid.* 1.

³⁰ Hyaeweol Choi, *Gender and Mission Encounters in Korea: New Women, Old Ways* (California: University of California Press, 2009).

³¹ *Ibid.* 20.

Korean women, Choi notes the complexities of the ‘transcultural and religious’ encounters that took place at the turn of the twentieth century against a backdrop of Japan’s imperial power that was to embark. In explicating the interplay of the three different groups, Choi points out the multi-faceted nature of Church and mission history in Korea, which sometimes involved conflicts and opposing views. Her work is notable in employing ‘missionary fictions’, in addition to the various archival mission materials and personal writings, to look into missionary (both men and women) representations of womanhood.

Choi represents both western women missionaries and Korean women as possessing agency, and examines how the two groups negotiated their cultural and social norms as to ‘women’s proper place’ through their cross-cultural encounter.³² In her final chapter she shows how Korean women acted independently, sometimes in opposition to their Christian missionary mentors and Korean nationalist expectations; however, her discussion in this regard focuses on the ‘New Woman’ phenomenon of the 1920s and 1930s, and not the early Korean mission period of the late 19th and early 20th century that is the main focus of this thesis. Moreover, although Choi notes how the western women missionaries were impressed by Korean women’s ‘dedication, persistence, hard work, and self-sacrifice’,³³ she does not show whether or how this cultural encounter had an enduring impact on the missionary women in terms of effecting real or lasting changes.

From the review of literature above, it is clear that, so far, there has been little or no research on the responses of western women missionaries to the cultural encounter with Korean women in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Moreover, there was been very little exploration of the literary narratives written by western women missionaries.³⁴ This thesis intends to fill these research gaps, this contributing to the area of the history of Church, focusing on Korean modern history and women, with a specific focus on Victorian and Confucian womanhood.

Main Texts and Methodology

³² *Ibid.* See Chapter 3, ‘The Lure and Danger of the Public Sphere.’

³³ *Ibid.* 74.

³⁴ See Hyaeweol Choi, ‘Missionary Zeal in a Transformed Melodrama: Gendered Evangelicalism in Korea,’ *AJWS* Vol. 7 No.1, (2001), 7-39; Kwak Seung-sook, ‘Annie Baird Shinsoseol Yeongu’ [A Study on Annie Baird’s Sinsoseol], *Hankuk Munhak Yirongwa Bipyong*, Vol.63 (2014), 139-159; Yi In-Sung, ‘Annie Baird’s Mission Literature World,’ *Munhakgwa Jonggyo*, Vol.13, Issue 2 (2008), 225-250; Yi Hyun Ju, ‘Pobai and Ewa: the comparison of the two woman characters in Annie Baird’s *Daybreak in Korea* and Arthur Noble’s *Ewa: A Tale of Korea*,’ *Sinhakgwa Segye*, Vol. 62, 2008, 472-505.

In regard to the cultural encounter between western female missionaries and Korean women in the late 19th and early 20th century, the women missionaries themselves have left us a rich resource in the form of a body of literature and first hand narratives, which provide fascinating insights into cultural translation at the moment of encounter, portraying Korean people, culture, and traditional religions.

The thesis will draw heavily upon the narratives³⁵ and writings of Annie Baird, Ellasue Wagner, Jean Perry and Lillias Underwood. All four women served in Korea for more than 20 years, and all were prolific writers. Although most of the narratives were published around the beginning of the 20th century (1904-1911), they refer back as far as the late 19th century, and to the beginning of the real encounter with Korean women.³⁶

The main narrative sources for literary review, which will be analysed in the light of other relevant materials, are: Annie L.A. Baird's *Daybreak in Korea: A Tale of Transformation in the Far East* (1909);³⁷ Ellasue Canter Wagner's *Kim Su Bang and Other Stories of Korea* (1909)³⁸ and *Pokjumie* (1911);³⁹ Jean Perry's *The Man in Grey* (1906),⁴⁰ *Chilgoopie the Glad* (1906)⁴¹ and *Uncle Mac the Missionary* (1906);⁴² and Lillias Underwood's *Fifteen Years among the Topknots or, Life in Korea* (1904)⁴³ and *With Tommy Tompkins in Korea* (1905).⁴⁴ All deal with the missionaries' Woman's Work for Woman in the mission field of Korea, standing against the degradation of Confucian women and promoting womanhood in domesticity, and all include Korean females as major or minor characters. The analysis of these missionary narratives and writings will employ a wide spectrum of socio-cultural, post-colonial and feminist approaches.

³⁵ Following Bang In-Shik, 'Reading *Daybreak in Korea* and *Kim Su Bang and Other Stories of Korea*: Korean Converts and American Missionaries as Sisterly Initiative?' *Munhakgwa Jonggyo [Literature and Religion]*, Vol.19. Issue 4, 2014, 133-153, this thesis views the Western women's writings, such as Annie Baird's *Daybreak in Korea* (1909) and Ellasue Wagner's *Kim Su Bang and Other Stories of Korea* (1909), as travel narratives.

³⁶ These narratives were based on their mission experiences reaching back to the late 19th century. Annie Baird and Jean Perry began their mission work around 1891, while Lillias Underwood arrived in Korea in 1888. The exception is Ellasue Wagner, whose stories of *Kim Su Bang* appear to have been based on her mission experiences in the Holston Institute for Girls in Songdo starting around 1904.

³⁷ Annie L. Baird, *Daybreak in Korea: A Tale of Transformation in the Far East* (New York, Fleming H. Revell Company, 1909).

³⁸ Ellasue C. Wagner, *Kim Su Bang and Other Stories of Korea* (Nashville, Tenn.: Publishing House of the M.E. Church, South, 1909).

³⁹ Ellasue C. Wagner, *Pokjumie* (Nashville, Tenn.: Publishing House of the M.E. Church, South, 1911).

⁴⁰ Jean Perry, *The Man in Grey* (London, S.W.Partridge & Co., Ltd., 1906).

⁴¹ Jean Perry, *Chilgoopie the Glad* (London, S.W.Partridge & Co., Ltd., 1906).

⁴² Jean Perry, *Uncle Mac the Missionary* (London, S.W.Partridge & Co., Ltd., 1908).

⁴³ Lillias H. Underwood, *Fifteen Years among the Topknots; or, Life in Korea* (New York, American Tract Society, 1904).

⁴⁴ Lillias H. Underwood, *With Tommy Tompkins in Korea* (New York, Fleming Revell Company, 1905).

In terms of methodology, this research uses the female missionaries' novels and narratives, mentioned above, as the main sources, along with non-fictional materials such as memoirs, autobiographies and other historical documents, to explore the dynamics of gender, class, race, and religious and socio-cultural differences in the encounter between western missionary women and indigenous Korean women around the late 19th and early 20th century.

Given that many of the narratives are fictional or contain fictional aspects, it may be asked whether they are reliable sources for scientific enquiry or for historical and social analysis that seeks for objective knowledge. Here it is important to note that the female missionary literary narratives are based firmly on the authors' first-hand experience and observation in the mission field in Korea. The accounts are not invention, as their authors are keen to point out. For example, Ellasue Wagner characterizes her story 'Mittome' in *Kim Su Bang and other Stories of Korea* as 'a true story of thirty years ago.'⁴⁵ Similarly, in the prefatory note to her book, *The Man in Grey*, Jean Perry states clearly that 'names have been changed and details altered, but the friends of whom I write are still in Korea.'⁴⁶

Literary narratives, unlike formal writings or reports, can offer an effective means of social analysis, providing an accurate and vivid understanding of social realities and cultures. Novels and narratives can also be a good tool to humanize people's struggles, allowing the readers access to the community the author describes. In this sense, literary narratives can be invaluable, especially in social and cultural anthropological study. When describing their work in the field, especially in ethnographic studies, anthropologists often write in a style close to that of fiction, observing and listening to interactions between people, looking for hidden patterns of social reality.⁴⁷ Indeed, some anthropologists have created engaging fictions out of their works, as for example Amitav Ghosh's engaging *In an Antique Land: History in the Guise of a Traveler's Tale*⁴⁸ or Timothy Jenkins' *The Life of Property: House, Family and Inheritance in Bearn, South West France*, which makes use of

⁴⁵ See Ellasue C. Wagner, 'Aggie Comes Home: A True Story of Thirty Years Ago', *The Korea Mission Field*, vol. 29. No.2, (Feb. 1933), 26-8.

⁴⁶ Perry, *The Man in Grey*, 6.

⁴⁷ See Stephen Linstead, 'Objectivity, Reflexivity, and Fiction: Humanity, Inhumanity, and the Science of the Social', *Human Relations*, Vol.47, Iss.11, (Nov. 1994): 1321-1346.

⁴⁸ Amitav Ghosh, *In an Antique Land: History in the Guise of a Traveler's Tale* (New York: Random House Inc, 1994); see also Damien Stankiewicz, 'Anthropology and Fiction: An Interview with Amitav Ghosh', *Cultural Anthropology*, Vol.27, Issue 3, 535-541.

the Gascon novel to explicate ‘marriage, inheritance and social change’ among French farming communities.⁴⁹

Nevertheless, it is necessary to ask what might be the disanalogies between a work of fiction (novels and narratives) and a social-anthropological study? While the work of social cultural anthropology observes and records aspects such as customs, gender, values, behaviour patterns, and a wide range of cultural practices in order to subject them to scientific analysis, seeking to present a non-judgemental view of the world, a work of fiction may present a ‘subjective’ world, with some things emphasized and others removed, in order to represent things and events in a certain light. A fictional narrative can contain events that might not have happened. This fictive aspect means that texts might present or reinforce misconceived or distorted ideas about certain cultures and peoples: because a fictional narrative may be based on its author’s metaphysical value judgement, it can be seen as ‘subjective’ (in an epistemic sense), such that its validity cannot be established independently of the author. In this case, it may be asked whether the narrated experience and interpretations of the western female missionaries drawn upon by this research might have a distorting effect with regard to the picture they present of the lives of Korean women and the overall historical and social situation in Korea in the period. To guard against this kind of distortion, it is necessary to consider literary narratives and particular works of interpretation and narrated experience through a critical lens, and with great care.

In deciding whether or not a particular work of interpretation and narrated experience is a reliable and fruitful source, it is necessary to apply certain criteria. Because literary interpretation usually works from a certain scheme of reference, whether explicit or implicit, the researcher should begin by determining whether the scheme of reference upon which a particular work is based can be considered as ‘objective.’⁵⁰ If so, then the text in question can be admitted as a reliable and fruitful source.

However, this raises a further question, that of what it means to be ‘objective.’ According to Karl Popper, the objectivity of scientific knowledge lies in the fact that it can be ‘intersubjectively tested.’⁵¹ Therefore, in order for a text to be accepted as reliable, its scheme of reference must be tested against and confirmed by other contemporary writings and historical documents to find out whether it is consistent with them. For example, in

⁴⁹ See Timothy Jenkins, *The Life of Property: House, Family and Inheritance in Bearn, South West France* (New York: Berghahn, 2010).

⁵⁰ cf. Andrei Marmor, ‘Three Concepts of Objectivity’, *Positive Law and Objective Values* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 131-134.

⁵¹ See K. Popper, *Postscript to the Logic of Scientific Discovery* (London: Hutchinson, 1983).

Annie Baird's *Daybreak in Korea*, the child Pobai's arranged marriage takes place against the backdrop of the late Choson, probably around the late 19th or early 20th century. In order to find out whether Baird's text takes an objective stance about marriage as shown in the narrative, we need to look at aspects such as culture, time period, gender, and age. Contemporary historical documents, such as *Choson Yeo Sokgo* [Research on Choson's custom in regard to women, 朝鮮女俗考];⁵² an official report by Homer B. Hulbert (1863-1949) in *The Passing of Korea*,⁵³ dealing with Choson Korean women's customs; and his article introducing the status of women in Korea in *The Korean Review*,⁵⁴ offer clear evidence that child arranged marriage was prevalent in the late Choson. Hence one can conclude that the story of Pobai is highly plausible given its setting in time and place, and may be admitted as a reliable and fruitful source. In the same way, it is possible to test all the missionary novels as to whether their scheme of reference takes an objective stance. As long as the text is proved to be 'objective' with regard to its particular scheme, then it can be admitted as reliable, and the main missionary literary narratives used in this thesis have all been confirmed as highly plausible with regard to the late Choson.

Yet while the main missionary literary narratives have been proved to be highly plausible in terms of their objective stance as to their scheme of reference, or major data, there might still be some concerns with regard to the minor data of 'detailed' narrated accounts of the lives of Korean women. Once again, to guard against distortion, this research has checked such detail against historical evidence, to confirm its factuality and objectivity. Then, only the data confirmed by the historical evidence is considered by this research as making a statement of 'truth.' For example, with regard to the data in the main female missionary literary narratives on the independence and historical agency of Korean women in the Korean modern history of the Church in the late 19th and early 20th century, this thesis also provides historical evidence on these issues drawn from official and historical archives, to ensure that the found data are not contrary to the historical facts. After confirming the data as truth, the research then moves to the next phase, linking the data on the existence of independent Korean women with the narration of historical and social change in Korea in that particular period.

⁵² Yi Nungwha, *Choson Yeo Sokgo* [Research on Choson's Custom in Regard to Women, 朝鮮女俗考], (Dongmun-sun: 1990), originally published in 1927 by Dongyang Suwon [Eastern Writings Institute].

⁵³ See Homer B. Hulbert, *The Passing of Korea* (New York: 1906).

⁵⁴ See Homer B. Hulbert, 'The Status of Woman in Korea', *The Korean Review*, vol.2, 1902 (Seoul: Methodist Publishing House), 1-8, 53-9, 97-101, 155-9.

Consequently, the research methodology acknowledges the danger of, and takes rigorous steps to prevent, distorting effects, ensuring that the works of missionary interpretation and narrated experience that are drawn upon by this thesis can be considered as reliable academic sources. As such, the arguments and statements made in this research can be considered to have their basis in objectivity, and are not subject to distorting effects.

The purpose and motivation of the female missionary narratives

From the late 19th century on, a considerable amount of literature, including novels, periodicals and pamphlets, was produced on behalf of the mission effort in the West. Some works written by women missionaries or missionary wives carried triumphant narratives of Christian conversion, and these stories of success were intended specifically for their home audiences,⁵⁵ including the supporters and donors upon whom the missionaries' future endeavours often depended.

The main mission narratives that have already been mentioned above, based in large part upon the author's real experiences in the mission field, were intended indeed mainly for readers in the West. They address audiences such as church communities in the United States and in Britain to solicit further support for the mission project. Almost all are in English, and therefore seem not to have been intended for native Koreans,⁵⁶ let alone the Korean women who feature in them. For example, it was not until 1981, 74 years after its first publication, that Annie Baird's *Daybreak in Korea* was translated into Korean by Jungsoon Yoo.⁵⁷

Many of the missionary novels and narratives include photographic or graphic illustrations, aimed at providing the western audience with a 'realistic' portrayal of the native 'oriental' Korean people and culture and of the missionaries' work. In Baird's *Daybreak in Korea*, for example, the main character Pobai ['the converted Pobai'] is pictured in a neat dress, with the caption 'Pobai on Her Way to Church.' Perry's *Chilgoopie* carries an illustration of a woman missionary and her Korean assistant at the Children's Home, while the drawings in her *The Man in Grey* provide an effective medium to demonstrate the truth of the narrative.

⁵⁵ Women were not only producers, but also readers. In particular, women in the church-going communities at home were both consumers of the missionary discourses, and potential recruits to the mission field. See Maina Chawla Singh, *Gender, Religion, and 'Heathen Lands': American Missionary Women in South Asia (1860s-1940s)*, (New York: Garland, 2000), 140.

⁵⁶ Only Annie Baird's short stories written in Korean, such as *Two Short Stories: Ko Young Gyu Jeon and BuBuui MobonJeon* (Seoul: Korean Religious Tract Society, 1911) appear to have been addressed mainly to Koreans (not westerners) to enlighten them.

⁵⁷ Annie Baird, *Daybreak in Korea: A Tale of Transformation in the Far East*, Korean trans. by Jungsoon Yu (Seoul, 1981).

Wagner's *Kim Su Bang and Other Stories of Korea* and Underwood's *Fifteen Years Among Topknots* include quite a good number of pictures of native Koreans, which may have been intended to emphasise the reality of the stories, thus encouraging support for the mission works in Korea.

In terms of content, the female missionary narratives are intriguing in that they portray not only the 'oriental' women of Korea, but also the female missionaries themselves, albeit to a much lesser extent. For example, Baird's *Daybreak in Korea* portrays a Korean peasant woman, but also includes a female missionary as a minor character. Ellasue Wagner's *Pokjumie*, which centres upon the character of a concubine, and Jean Perry's *The Man in Grey*, which tells the story of young Mrs Min, subject to an arranged marriage, also feature female missionaries.

Consequently, reading female missionary narratives portraying Korean women around the late 1800's and early 1900's is an intriguing and complex task, involving literary studies, historiography, missionary studies and theology.

Annie Baird testifies to such complexities in the forward to her work *Daybreak in Korea: A Tale of Transformation in the Far East*,⁵⁸ where she intimates that she is only documenting history: 'The contents of the following pages are little more than a compilation and rearrangement of facts and incidents such as come daily under the observation of missionaries in Korea.' Yet this claim reveals the multi-dimensions of the task she has set herself, as the text will be not only a report of 'daily' 'facts and incidents', but will be a 'little more' than 'a compilation' of the material at hand. The author sees herself as making a 'rearrangement', of not only her own observations, but also those of other 'missionaries in Korea'. This implies that she makes herself sort of a spokeswoman for missionaries, putting into words and narratives what her fellows, sometimes even including male fellows, must have experienced with her; hence she positions herself on a par with them, with a role that goes beyond that of a reporter, while at the same time her 'little more' suggests a guise of understating modesty.

As for Ellasue Wagner, she states that her intention in writing *Pokjumie* was based on the belief 'that a closer and more intimate knowledge of the lives of the people of Korea will call forth greater sympathy and help for these people.'⁵⁹ The novel, therefore, was far from being the kind of formal report usually favoured by most male agents of mission; rather it

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* 5.

⁵⁹ *Pokjumie* (1911), 7.

was a female author's own, 'more intimate' and 'closer' approach, an attempt to get to know 'the lives of the people of Korea,' and to pass such knowledge on to the reader.

We will return later to the question of what exactly Wagner meant by the intention to 'call forth greater sympathy and help' for the native Koreans. That aim is echoed by Jean Perry, in the preface to her book *The Man in Grey*, where she writes that: 'I have written this story, which is founded on fact, in order that friends may be drawn into the inner circle in more loving sympathy than ever before.'⁶⁰ However, while Wagner's terminology often presents the Korean characters seemingly much as the recipients of help, Perry speaks of 'loving sympathy' for the 'people of Korea', who are her friends and 'inner circle,' implying more intimacies to the Korean characters, rather than simple recipients of the mission.

As for Underwood, she describes her narrative as 'simply reminiscent, a brief story of a few years of the writer's life' in Korea.⁶¹ She then makes it clear that this work is not to be 'a text or reference book on Korea' in formal terms, but rather 'her own personal observation'. Nevertheless, she hoped to provide an 'insight into the customs and character of the people, and their moral and political atmosphere, with the results, opportunities and possible limitations of mission work.'⁶²

Already it is becoming clear that the narratives of these women missionaries are more than trivial literature. While not comparable to the lightest works of James Joyce or Ernest Hemingway, they are full of subtleties.

The local and historical background

The missionary narratives unfold against the background of the final years of Choson old Korean society. During that period many of the ordinary Korean people suffered poverty, and the years were marked by natural disasters such as famines, floods, and disease. Political turmoil and conflict with foreign powers, initiated in 1876 by Japan's demands to establish diplomatic relations with a more open Korea,⁶³ added to the already difficult circumstances, and the Choson Confucian government officers proved unable to cope with the critically and rapidly changing environment.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ *The Man in Grey* (1906), 6.

⁶¹ *Fifteen Years Among Topknots*, xi

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ On the history of Korea, see Bruce Comings, *Korea's Place in the Sun* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997).

⁶⁴ Geum Jangtae, 'The history of Confucian thought', in *The History of Korean Religious Thought II: Confucianism, Christianity*, (Seoul: Yonsei University Publishing, 1986), 169.

Following famine in 1809 and catastrophic flooding in 1817, Korea suffered more, similar, natural calamities as the century gets into the latter part. In the political sphere, 1811 saw the anti-government uprising of Kyung Rae Hong, while in 1862 there was a peasant's revolt in Jinju. In 1821, epidemic diseases across the country like the cholera were added, killing over 100,000 people. Farmers left their farmlands, and peasant resistance spread quickly through the southern part of the country. Landowners and wealthy farmers manipulated matters in their own interest, unjustly taking the lands of the poor, to add to their own estates. Price inflation soared, and many people were uprooted due to the unstable economic conditions (see Figures 1 and 2, below).⁶⁵

FIGURE 1
THE NEW RATIO CONCERNING FLOOD AND DROUGHT IN
CHOSON, BASED ON THE ANNALS OF THE CHOSON
DYNASTY⁶⁶

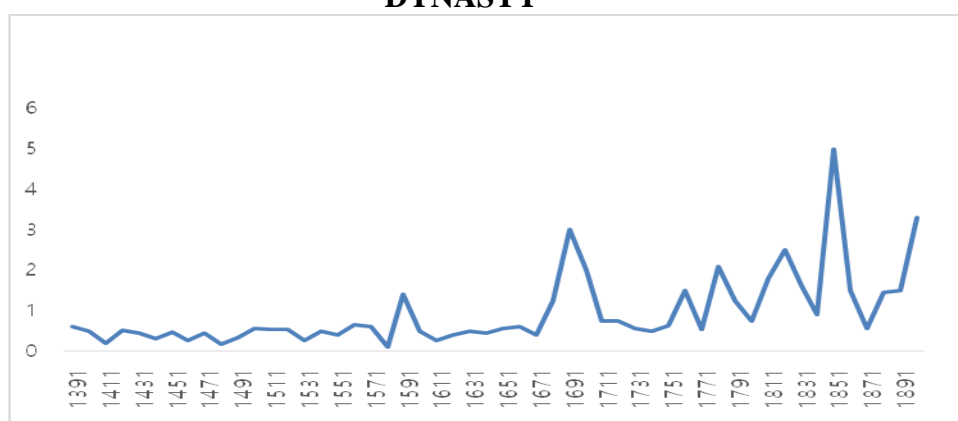
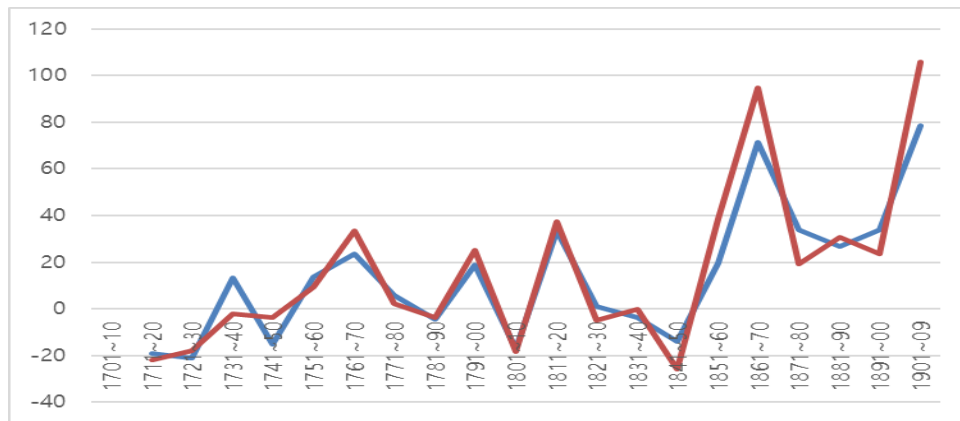


FIGURE 2
THE CONSUMER PRICE AND FLUCTUATION IN PRICE OF
RICE PLANTS (KOREA STAPLE FOOD)⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Concerning Figure 1, see Kim Jaeho, 'Hankuk Cheontong Sahoiui Gigeungwa Geu Daieung: 1392-1910' [Traditional society of Korea's drought and its response: 1392-1910], *Kyungjaesahak* [Economy and Historical Studies], Vol. 30, 2001, 47-85.; see also Yi Wooyeon, '18-19 Segi Sanrim Hwangpyehwawa nongjeop saengsansung' [Forest devastation and agricultural productivity in the 18th and the 19th century in Korea], in *suryangkyungjesaro bon chosonhugi* [The latter part of Choson, viewed from the perspective of its numerical economic history], ed. Yi Younghun (Seoul, 2004), 357. Concerning Figure 2, see Park Giju, 'jaewha gageokui chui, 1701-1909: kyeongjoo jibangeul chungsimeuro' ['The Commodity Price trend curves, 1701-1909, centering on the region of Kyeongjoo'], in *Soorang Kungjesaro Dasibon Chosonhoogi* [The latter part of Choson, viewed from the perspective of its numerical economic history] ed. Yi Younghun (Seoul, 2004), 205.

⁶⁶ Adapted from the original graph (by the author). For the year 1851, the original graph shows at least more than four, but does not give a specific number.

⁶⁷ Blue line is the consumer price rate and red line is the rice plants price rate.



The imbalanced distribution of landownership was described during the early 19th century by Jung Yakyong (1762-1836).⁶⁸ In view of the terrible realities facing most small farmers in the late Choson, he proposed a new farm system called Yeojeonron, which would be characterized by joint ownership, rather than privately-owned land, and joint cultivation and distribution. However, in the circumstances then prevailing, land ownership was becoming an oligopoly, while small farmers were falling into poverty as tenant farmer or labourers. Of every 100 households in the Ho-nam southern province in Choson, around five owned large areas of land, which were rented out at high rates to small farmers who often had no land of their own. Twenty-five of the 100 households cultivated their own land, while the remaining 70 had no lands, and had to cultivate the lands of others to survive, paying rent and fees to the land owners.⁶⁹

The wealthy land owners, mostly the noble class (Yangban), as well as government officers, would take the lands of others, especially small farm owners, by charging high interest.⁷⁰ Unable to meet these costs, small farmers would fall into debt and lose their own property. This situation led to resistance on the part of peasant communities and, given that in Choson the majority of the population were farmers, these conflicts brought severe instability to

⁶⁸ Jung Yakyong (1762-1836) was one of the most important Confucian scholars in *Silhak*, a reforming Confucian Philosophical School, prevalent in Choson in the late 17th century through the 19th century.

⁶⁹ Jung Yakyong (1762-1836), *Yeoyudang jeonseo* [與猶堂全書], vol.9 in *Hankuksa* [The History of Korea]:The Growth of Minjung Society in the Latter part of Choson, vol.36, Song Jinseop (ed.) (Seoul: the National History Compilation Committee, 2013), 278.

⁷⁰ See Miasimahiroshi, [官島博史], *Yangban* [兩班 : 李朝社会の特権階層], (中央公論社: 1995-8), trans. No Young Gu (Seoul, 1996), 262-264.

society, causing tensions and above all 'poverty' not only at local level, but across the entire country of Choson.⁷¹

The factors mentioned above provide ample explanation of why the missionary narratives focus largely on the peasant classes. Another important reason is to do with the nature and method of the early Protestant Christian mission in Korea, as missionaries primarily targeted the low and middle-low classes, and amongst them particularly women and girls.⁷²

When the Presbyterians decided to adopt the ten principles of the so-called Nevius Method for their mission in Korea they opted for a mission of the low class and made women their main targets in the first and the second clause of the document.⁷³

With Max Weber (1864-1920) one can perhaps explain why, especially in the early stages of the mission activities in Korea in the late 19th century, it was mainly the lower classes and the poor people, including women, who were the targets of the missionaries, as the desire to move out of poverty and to change their underprivileged economic and social position made members of the lower social strata more open to new ideas, thoughts and religions.⁷⁴ In particular the Protestant missionaries emphasized the conversion of women and the training of Christian girls, as mothers were seen as exercising spiritual and moral influence over their households and the future generations. This contrasts with the approach of the Catholic Church in their early mission period in old Korea, when primarily the upper and the middle-upper classes were evangelized.⁷⁵ The targeting of the lower classes by Protestants is confirmed by a wealth of Protestant Christian documents, especially those

⁷¹ *Jeongjo Sillok*, Vol.6. p.11a. The year 2, the month 7, the day 20. All Sillok citations refer to the *Choson Wangjo Sillok* 朝鮮王朝實錄 [The annals of the Choson Dynasty]. 48 vols. Reprint. (Seoul: Kuksa Pyeonchan wiwonhoi, 1955-1958).

⁷² See H.G. Underwood, *The Call of Korea* (New York, 1908), 109-14. C.C.Vinton, 'Presbyterian Mission Work in Korea' *The Missionary Review of the World*, vol. 6, no. 9 (Sept.1893), 671.

⁷³ See C.A. Clark, *The Korean Church and the Nevius Method* (New York: 1930).

⁷⁴ Yi Sang Gyu, 'Christianity and its early recipients in Korea'. Quoting Max Weber (1864-1920), Yi contends that social position and class may be important factors in formulating religious trends and that the lower classes and the poor have proved more open to new ideas, thoughts and religion because they tend to desire social improvement. Consequently, the main recipients of Christianity were the poor, mainly women, especially in the early stages of the mission in the late 19th century (see *News Paper of Gukmin*, 26 August 2011), 36.

⁷⁵ Concerning the early Catholic Church in Korea, refer to: Kevin N. Cawley, 'Dangerous Women in the Early Catholic Church in Korea,' in David W. Kim ed., *Religious Transformation in Modern Asia* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 76-97.; Gari Ledyard, 'Kollumba Kang Wansuk: An Early Catholic Activist and Martyr,' in Robert E. Buswell and Timothy S. Lee eds., *Christianity in Korea* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2005); Kim Ok-hy, "Women in the History of Catholicism in Korea," *Korea Journal* 24:8 (1984), 28-40.

written in *Han Geul*, the Korean alphabet,⁷⁶ invented for and used mainly by the lower classes, including women.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ According to clause six of the principles of the Nevius Method, it reads: 'In all literary work, a pure Korean, free from Sinicism, should be our aim.' One of the missionaries' main efforts, therefore, was the learning and teaching of Korean. In fact, in a letter dated 12 April 1894, addressed to a correspondent named Gussie, Annie Baird wrote of a Korean woman servant: 'Last winter I taught her to read her own language. She learned in about a month, to her own great astonishment, ... soon after that she asked for baptism, and I am teaching and praying with her every day with that end in view.'

⁷⁷ See C.C. Vinton, 'Presbyterian Mission Work in Korea' (1893), *The Missionary Review of the World*, vol. 6, no. 9 (Sept. 1893), 671.

Chapter 1. The Female Missionary Authors, and their Historical and Theological Background

1.1 Historical and theological background

The historical and theological background relevant to this thesis is that of the foreign mission in North America and Europe, particularly the western-centred ideology of ‘manifest destiny’ prevalent in the late 19th century among Anglophone Protestant evangelicals. Upon the foreign mission was remarkable not least for the emergence of the middle class Church women and their extensive participation, among them Baird, Perry, Underwood, and Wagner. In terms of theology, conservatism prevailed, and this is revealed in the narratives, which focus on individual salvation, with little acknowledgement of political movements or demands.

1.1.1 Western-centred ideology of ‘manifest destiny’

The Protestant Revival movement that swept across North America and Europe in the 19th century was informed by a millennial evangelical vision¹ that the destiny of human history was to build the Christian republic in a world in which all human societies would be renewed through the guidance of Christian morality. This vision evolved into the idea of ‘manifest destiny’, prevalent especially among the Anglophone peoples, who believed that they were to play a role of speciality in the mission of the world evangelization.² The idea originated from the Puritan theocracy of colonial New England, conceived as ‘a city on a hill’ and ‘a light shining in the darkness for all the world.’³

In the belief that ‘success in the work of the world’s conversion’ will follow ‘human growth and prospective greatness’,⁴ Josiah Strong, Pastor of the Central Congregational Church, Cincinnati, Ohio, representing the Presbyterian foreign mission in America, justified the use of mission to propagate Western civilization to non-western nations. He argued that

¹ In 19th century America the term the ‘evangelical’ referred to the traditional mainstream Protestant Church, now influenced by the revival movement, whose emphasis was on individual conversion through faith in Jesus’ crucifixion. See Ryu Dae Young, ‘The meaning of the “evangelical” in the early Korean Church and its modern interpretation’, *Korean Christianity and History*, Vol.15 (2001.8), 117.

² Wilbert R. Shenk, ‘Introduction’, in *North American Foreign Missions, 1810-1914: Theology, Theory, and policy.*, Shenk, Wilbert R., ed. (Grand Rapids, 2004), 5.

³ As expressed by John Winthrop. See Alan Heimert and Andrew Delbanco, eds., *The Puritans in America: A Narrative Anthology* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), 9.

⁴ See Austin Phelps, ‘Introduction’ in Josiah Strong, *Our Country: Its Possible Future and its Present Crisis*, (New York: 1885), vii.

‘while on this continent God is training the Anglo-Saxon race for its mission, a complementary work has been in progress in the great world beyond. God has two hands. Not only is he preparing in our civilization the die with which to stamp the nations, but... he is preparing mankind to receive our impress.’⁵ Evangelical missionaries, resonating with Strong, convinced themselves of their divine calling to build Christian republics in foreign fields, coincidentally showing much in common with the western colonialist exploration of ‘Oriental’ societies.

Missionary ethnological terminology and descriptions of family life, politics and cultures in non-Christian societies thus often stressed the degradation of women through practices such as concubinage, polygamy, bride sale, child marriage and slavery.⁶ Indeed, the role of women and their subjugated status in the ‘heathen’ societies were a focus of interest in church congregations. In line with this, the evangelistic ethnology adopted a theology of mission that emphasized the conversion of ‘heathen’ women, especially mothers, as the most effective means of Christianizing the whole heathen lands of the ‘Orient.’⁷ For example, as early as 1869 we find the following argument in *Heathen Woman’s Friend*:⁸

When we look at the domestic, civil and religious systems of Pagandom, we sicken at their rottenness. We feel greatly moved to give them the blessings of Christian civilization. To do this economically, i.e., to have the largest results from the smallest outlay of money, muscle, thought, and spiritual power, we must get at the fountains of influence. As much as Pagan men despise their women, they cannot abolish the physical necessity that gives them control of their children, during the years that most shape their life. To Christianize the women would be to capture their stronghold, and insure a better civilization. It would be getting a lever well under their systems of wrong. With a good fulcrum, and God to apply the power, there would be a new order of things in those ‘habitations of cruelty,’ within a half a century.

Based on this belief that the conversion of ‘heathen’ women would open up their lands for Christian civilization, it became imperative to reach them. Given that the women in those heathen lands, such as Confucian Asia, often lived in seclusion, this presented certain challenges. These would be met by the ‘Woman’s Work for Woman’ project, under which female missionaries would minister to heathen women. Informed and justified by the then

⁵ Josiah Strong ‘The Anglo-Saxon and the world’s future’, in *Our Country: Its Possible Future and its Present Crisis* (New York: 1885), 178.

⁶ Joan Jacobs Brumberg ‘The Ethnological Mirror: American Evangelical Women and Their Heathen Sisters, 1870-1910’, in *Women and the Structure of Society: Selected Research from the Fifth Berkshire Conference on the History of Women*, Barbara J. Harris and Jo Ann K. McNamara (eds.), (Durham, N.C.: 1984), 109.

⁷ Patricia Ruth Hill, *The World Their Household: The American Woman’s Foreign Mission Movement and Cultural Transformation, 1870-1920* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1985), 132-133.

⁸ Jennie Fowler Willing, *The Heathen Woman’s Friend*, Methodist Episcopal Church. Woman’s Foreign Missionary Society, (Boston: Woman’s Foreign Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church), Vol.1, (August 1869), 20.

prevalent Victorian gender heritage,⁹ women, and here specifically white, western, middle-class Protestant women,¹⁰ were idealized as perfect moral guardians and teachers of how to create a Christian home, evangelizing and transferring their ideal of Victorian womanhood through their cultural transfer of domestic responsibilities to non-western societies, and in the process making better mothers and better wives.¹¹

1.1.2. The female missionaries and the foreign mission

As mentioned above, one of the most notable characteristics of this mission movement was the participation of women. While this trend was strong among all the Anglophone countries, it was American Protestant women missionaries who travelled to Korea in the largest numbers and exerted the greatest influence there in the late 19th and early 20th century. In the early part of that period women from each of the major Protestant evangelical denominations, including Presbyterian, and Methodist churches in America, created their own foreign mission organizations with female leadership, although the 'parent boards' remained in the hands of male directors. For example, in 1869, Methodist Episcopal women formed the Women's Foreign Mission Society. A year later in 1870, Presbyterian women formed the Ladies' Board of Foreign Mission Society.¹²

The female missionary activity was accompanied by the publication of materials designed for middle-class church women, often used as a means of self-education. These included the Presbyterian *Woman's Work for Woman* (1890-1904)¹³; *The Heathen Woman's Friend*

⁹ Amy Kaplan, 'Manifest Domesticity,' *American Literature*, vol.70, no 3, (Sept. 1998), 585-6, points out how deeply the language of domesticity suffused the debates about global mission and national expansion: 'By withdrawing from direct agency in the male arena of commerce and politics, (in the separate sphere) woman's sphere can be represented by both women and men as a more potent agent for national expansion.'

¹⁰ See Patricia Ruth Hill, *The World Their Household: The American Woman's Foreign Mission Movement and Cultural Transformation, 1870-1920* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1985), 5. See also Barbara Reeves-Ellington, 'Women, Mission, and Nation Building in Ottoman Europe, 1832-1872,' in *Competing Kingdoms: Women, Mission, Nation, and the American Protestant Empire, 1812-1960*, Barbara Reeves-Ellington and et al.(eds.), (Durham & London: 2010), 271-292.

¹¹ See Helen Barrett Montgomery (1861-1934), *Western Women in Eastern Lands: An Outline study of Fifty Years of Woman's Work in Foreign Missions* (New York, 1910), 105-106.

¹² Here it is noticeable that the women's societies were 'auxiliaries' to the main male-led Assembly's Board of Foreign Missions. Their responsibilities included raising funds for the support of female missionaries, and building girls' schools and hospitals for women. Between 1870 and 1910 the women's foreign mission saw remarkable growth in terms of size of organization and financial contribution. For example, the Presbyterian group grew from 100 auxiliary sections in 1870 to 10,869 in 1909. (See Joan Jacobs Brumberg, 'The Ethnological Mirror: American Evangelical Women and Their Heathen Sisters, 1870-1910,' in *Women and the Structure of Society: Selected Research from the Fifth Berkshire Conference on the History of Women*, Barbara J. Harris and JoAnn K. McNamara (eds.), (Durham: Duke University Press, 1984), 112.

¹³ *Woman's Work for Woman*, Woman's Foreign Missionary Society of the Presbyterian Church (Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.), (New York : Woman's Foreign Missionary Societies of the Presbyterian Church, 1890-1904).

(1869-1895)¹⁴ and *Woman's Missionary Friend* (1896-1940)¹⁵, both published by women's groups in the Methodist Episcopal Church; and *Woman's Missionary Advocate* (1888-1910)¹⁶, produced by the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. These magazines contained missionary literature such as stories of successful evangelization, poems, pictures, and non-fiction reports and letters from the mission field.¹⁷

The extensive participation of women in foreign mission was a new and remarkable phenomenon. For many decades, however, women were not employed as missionaries, and the only circumstance in which they would travel into the mission field was as the wife and helpmate of a male missionary.¹⁸ In that role, they were expected to exemplify the ideal Christian woman, showing 'heathen' families how to create an ideal Christian home.¹⁹ This was based on the belief that 'one could not expect a convert to Christianity automatically to become a virtuous, useful, and praiseworthy wife and mother without anyone to instruct her and inculcate within her the principles of Christian womanhood.'²⁰

The role of women in the field expanded not because of any deliberate desire to open up the working space available to them, but rather because most of the native women in the 'oriental' mission field were secluded, and thus inaccessible to the western male missionaries. An early example of the recognition of missionary wives' own ministry toward women in the mission field is found in the following farewell sermon preached to missionary brides:²¹

It will be your business ... to teach these women, to whom your husbands can have but little, or no access. Go then, and do all in your power, to enlighten their minds, and bring them to the knowledge of the truth. Go, and if possible, raise their character to the dignity

¹⁴ *The Heathen Woman's Friend*, Methodist Episcopal Church. Woman's Foreign Missionary Society, (Boston: Woman's Foreign Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1869-1895).

¹⁵ *Woman's Missionary Friend*, Methodist Episcopal Church. Woman's Foreign Missionary Society. (Boston, Mass. : Woman's Foreign Missionary Society, Methodist Episcopal Church, 1896-1940).

¹⁶ *Woman's Missionary Advocate*, Methodist Episcopal Church, South. Board of Missions.; Woman's Foreign Mission Society (Methodist Episcopal Church, South), (Nashville, Tenn.: Woman's Missionary Society of the M.E. Church, South, 1888-1910).

¹⁷ The magazines had a wide readership, of up to 25,000.

¹⁸ There was a consensus that the divine sanction on family order required that the male missionary should have a wife. See Rufus Anderson, 'Introductory Essay on the Marriage of Missionaries', in William Ellis, *Memoir of Mrs. Mary Mercy Ellis, Wife of Rev. William Ellis, Missionary in the South Seas, and Foreign Secretary of the London Missionary Society* (Boston: Crocker & Brewster, 1836) vii-viii. See also the American board in *The Panoplist, and Missionary Magazine*, Vol.11, (April, 1815), 178-181, justifying the marriage of male missionaries as an indispensable duty.

¹⁹ See Patricia R. Hill, *The World Their Household*, and 'An Open Letter', *Woman's Work for Woman* 5 (March 1890), 59.

²⁰ Lisa Joy Pruitt, *A Looking Glass for Ladies: American Protestant Women and the Orient in the Nineteenth Century*, (Macon, GA, 2005), 52.

²¹ Jonathan Allen, 'A Sermon, Delivered at Haverhill, Feb. 5, 1812, on the Occasion of the Young Ladies being about to embark as the wives of the Rev. Messieurs Judson and Newell, going as Missionaries to India', in *Pioneers in Mission*, ed. R. Pierce Beaver (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1966), 276-277.

of rational beings, and to the rank of Christians in a Christian land. Teach them to realize that they are not an inferior race of creatures; but stand upon a par with men... Now the task of education and enlightenment, and uplifting the status of women in 'heathen', 'oriental' (non-western) societies, became an important mission project, and one that was crucial in any assessment of the countries' overall advancement.

From around the 1870's, women were given the opportunity to serve, not only as wives, but as professional missionaries.²² Against the backdrop of a nascent women's rights movement, and the establishment of colleges and universities for women, single female missionaries embarked upon mission work for women in the non-Christian Eastern lands. This development was to have a tremendous impact not just overseas, but also on the women in their home churches and societies. Events for fund raising and support for women's mission projects were held by the constituents at home,²³ and these were critical to the success of their evangelizing effort.

This extension of women's role and participation in foreign mission may have been due in large part to the growth in higher education for women. From the middle of the 19th century, there were founded numerous colleges and universities for women, and in America, there were even medical colleges for women. By 1880 one in three students in higher education was a woman.²⁴

Another possible factor was that in 19th century America and Europe (especially England), women's opportunities for professional fulfilment were both few and limited. Despite the wider availability of higher education, for many women the only options were 'marriage and motherhood or genteel but poverty-stricken and indolent spinsterhood.'²⁵ For those who sought professional employment, the only jobs available were those of nurse, librarian, social worker, and school teacher.

Under these circumstances, for a good number of highly educated women the role of female missionary satisfied the socially acceptable or sought after virtues for women without offending the strict standards of Victorian womanhood, while providing a good opportunity to follow their own ambitions. Hence, a career as missionary was an attractive option for

²² Concerning the relationship between the missionary wife and the single professional female missionary, see Jane Haggis, 'Professional Ladies & Working Wives: Female Missionaries in the London Missionary Society & its South Travancore District, South India in the 19th century.' Ph.D. Thesis, University of Manchester, 1991.

²³ See *Pioneers in Mission*, ed. R. Pierce Beaver (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1966), 54.

²⁴ See Patricia R. Hill, *The World Their Household*.

²⁵ Fiona Bowie, 'Introduction: Reclaiming Women's Presence' in *Women and Missions: Past and Present*, Fiona Bowie, Deborah Kirkwood and Shirley Ardener (eds.) (Providence, RI: Berg, 1993), 5.

middle-class women, an alternative to a solely marital identity, with a guarantee of modest economic security.

That female missionaries were not considered equal to their male counterparts can be seen from the disparity in their remuneration. Taking as an example the American Presbyterian mission, as of 1902, the salary for a married missionary couple was \$1,250; Single male missionaries received \$833.33,²⁶ while the salary for a single woman was \$625. Nevertheless, the woman's salary appears to have been relatively high in comparison to the average annual income of American state and local government workers, which in 1900 was \$590. In the same year the salary for a public school teacher, the most usual job for an educated American woman, stood at \$328/year.²⁷ Furthermore, as the local cost of living out in the mission field was much lower than at home,²⁸ the salaries earned by female missionaries were worth relatively more.

Moreover, the role of overseas missionary could provide women with better opportunities as 'a rare combination of church and socially sanctioned activity and freedom.'²⁹ For an educated woman living in a small town, overseas mission projects would have carried 'a charisma,' offering the chance to serve 'suffering' 'heathen sisters,' while also sparking a 'spirit of adventure', allowing the possibility to break out of the confines of social norms and expectations at home.³⁰ Even for those women with medical training, overseas mission was a better opportunity 'to perform operations, to study rare diseases, and to escape a professional life as a poorly paid listener to female complaints, her probable lot had she remained at home.'³¹ Lillias Underwood, for example, began her career as a medical missionary in Choson around 1888. She was thus able to fulfil herself not only as a missionary, but also professionally as a doctor. Had Underwood stayed in the US she would

²⁶ The Committee on Salaries of Unmarried Men justified the gap on the grounds of a man's 'personal expenses being greater and his necessarily more public life involving greater expense.' See Ann White, 'Counting the Cost of Faith: America's Early Female Missionaries', *Church History* 57, no.1 (March 1988), 26; Martha Huntley, 'Presbyterian Women's Work and Rights in the Korea Mission', *American Presbyterians* 65, no.1 (1987), 37-48.

²⁷ Income and Prices 1900 (http://usa.usembassy.de/etexts/his/e_prices1.htm), accessed 5 July, 2014. In regard to the product price, it reads: Butter (Pound) \$.26; Eggs (Dozen) \$.23.

²⁸ In general, a day-labourer in Choson would earn about 15-20 cents a day.

²⁹ See Barbara Welter, 'She Hath Done What She Could: Protestant Women's Missionary Careers in Nineteenth-Century America', *American Quarterly*, Vol. 30, No. 5, Special Issue: Women and Religion (Winter, 1978), 634.

³⁰ See Singh, Maina Chawla. *Gender, Religion, and 'Heathen Lands': American missionary women in South Asia (1860s-1940s)* (New York: Garland, Pub., 2000), 210-211.

³¹ See Barbara Welter, 'She Hath Done What She Could: Protestant Women's Missionary Careers in Nineteenth-Century America', 634.

have been severely limited in her career, confined to being a mere assistant to a male doctor, or worse, to working as a nurse.³²

Despite such seemingly advantages, missionary work was mainly conceived as a vocation, rather than a means to personal fulfilment. Evidently the sense of religious calling, self-sacrifice, and self-denial were important parts of the motivation of women missionaries. Lillias Underwood writes directly of the importance of self-sacrifice, without which one may not be capable of incurring ‘risks, dangers, hardships, death even, for such a glorious cause and glorious Master.’³³

1.1.3. Conservative theology in the late 19th and early 20th century

Around the end of the 19th century, foreign mission in North America and Europe was re-energized by the revival movement, under the leadership of Dwight L. Moody (1837-1899).³⁴ Against a backdrop of pre-millennial imagery, the Student Volunteer Movement (SVM) was established, and this was continued until the early 20th century. Indeed, many of the missionaries appointed to Korea around that time were influenced and recruited by the Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions.³⁵ The SVM’s influence was seen in missionaries’ heavy dependence on revivalistic methods of personal conversion, and especially in their emphasis on Bible study, individual pietism, and evangelism.³⁶

Arthur Judson Brown (1856 –1963), from 1895 general secretary of the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Mission, for example, observes the theological stance of the missionaries appointed to Korea as of the Puritan type, with a pre-millennial emphasis on strict

³² See Jeong Ran, Yoon, ‘The Desire of American Women Visiting Choson’s Ahnbang (Women’s room) in the Late 19th Century: Focused on Woman Missionary Lillias Horton Underwood,’ *Sarim* [The Historical Journal], Vol. 34, (2009), 105-134. See also Lillias Horton Underwood, *Fifteen Years Among the Topknots, or Life in Korea*, American Tract Society, 1904.

³³ See Lillias Underwood, *Underwood of Korea*, (New York: 1918), 80.

³⁴ Dwight L. Moody’s central message was ‘ruin by sin, redemption by Christ, and Regeneration by the Holy Ghost’. For Moody, sins were personal sins, and the decision to accept the message of salvation was the decision of each individual. The emphasis then was on individual conversion. He also stressed the stability of the Christian ‘home’, and motherhood and domesticity for Christian women.

³⁵ Ryu Dae Young, *Chogi Miguk Sungyosa Yeongu 1884-1910* [Research on the Early American Missionary in Korea (1884-1910)], 51. According to Ryu, in the period from 1906 to 1909, there were a total of 135 American missionaries ‘arrived’ in Korea: the number of newly arrived missionaries were 14 in 1906, 43 in 1907, 48 in 1908, 30 in 1909. Among these, 81 (almost 60%) were involved with or influenced by SVM: 8 in 1906, 23 in 1907, 29 in 1908, 21 in 1909. Thus we can infer that SVM had a major influence on the early Korean mission.

³⁶ See F. Ohlinger, ‘Feature of the Korean Field’, *The Student Missionary Enterprise*, Max Wood Moorhead (ed.), (Boston: Press of T. O. Metcalf & Co., 1894), 265–266; H. G. Underwood, ‘The Unevangelized Millions in Korea,’ *World-wide Evangelization, the Urgent Business of the Church* (New York: Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Mission, 1902), 93–95.

observance on the Sabbath day.³⁷ Dancing, smoking, and playing cards were considered sinful, and liberalism and high criticism on religion or the Bible as heresy. Any work in regard to one's livelihood was absolutely prohibited on Sunday,³⁸ but many went further than this. For example, Annie Baird writes in a letter of her husband William Baird's strict observance of the Sabbath, such that he even refrained from taking measures to save his vegetable garden from frost damage when faced with a sudden fall in temperatures one Saturday evening.³⁹ Stressing the same point, Lillias Underwood tells the story of a Korean son and mother, of whom the son was converted first to Christianity. When, on a Sunday, the as yet unconverted mother tried to work on repairs to their house, the son prevented her because it was the Sabbath. It then happened that the damaged section of the house collapsed, and would have killed the mother had she still been working there. Seeing this, the mother was converted to Christianity.⁴⁰

Another noticeable in terms of their theological characteristic was its pietism, which paid little heed to political reality and instead emphasized the salvation of individuals.⁴¹ In fact, in 1901 the Presbyterian council made a resolution to remain neutral in regard to political matters in Korea, and this was circulated to all the local churches there. The resolution contained five clauses, of which the first stated that missionaries would not get involved in political matters with regard to the government and its officers in Choson. The fourth clause stated that the church was not to encourage or discourage Korean church members with regard to political matters of the country. The final clause stated that neither the church nor the houses of missionaries were to be used as places in which to discuss political matters.⁴² This stance of political neutrality is reflected in a letter⁴³ written by Lulu E. Frey, who served in Korea from 1893 to 1920, in which she refers to the Japanese-Russian war in Korea:

Japan has been successful in several Naval battles and now is on the way North to meet the Russians on land. We look for news every day of a land engagement and hope Japan

³⁷ Arthur Judson Brown, *The Mastery of the Far East* (New York: Charles Scribners, 1919), 549.

³⁸ 'juileul matanghi jichyeoyaham'[Sunday needs to be kept as Sabbath day], *Sinhakweolbo*, (August 1903), 322-323; 'juil jichim' [Sunday Observance], (Dec. 1900), 10-13.

³⁹ Annie Baird to Gussie, April 12, 1894, Record Group 172-1-2, Philadelphia: The Presbyterian Historical Society. Also Annie Baird to 'Folks', Nov.12, 1900. In Ryu Dae Young, *Chogi Miguk Sungyosa Yeongu 1884-1910* [Research on the Early American Missionary in Korea (1884-1910)], 133.

⁴⁰ See *With Tommy Tompkins*, 287.

⁴¹ Min Kyung Bae describes the theological stance of the first western missionaries in Korea as characterized by its 'pure' evangelism with an emphasis on salvation of souls (individuals), with an indifferent attitude to society. See Min Kyung Bae, *Hankuk Gidokgyohwa* [The History of Korean Christianity], (Seoul, 1972), 127.

⁴² *Geurido shinmoon* [The Christian News], H.G. Underwood (ed.), 3 Oct., 1901. 1-2.

⁴³ Letter dated Feb. 23rd, 1904, from Lulu Frey, in Ewa Haktang, the Girl's School of the W.F.M. Society, Seoul, to Minnie (copy in the author's archive).

may continue to be successful for she [Japan] will not interfere with our work, while I fear Russia would not tolerate Protestant missions in Korea should she be in power here.

Here we see that Frey's main concern is not the danger posed to the Korean people by the violent realities of war and invasion by foreign powers, but rather which country or nation would continue to guarantee her missionary activities in the country.⁴⁴ Meanwhile, Richard Baird writes that as the Japanese-Russian War got under way, the only Westerners who remained at their mission posts at their own risk were the Presbyterian medical missionary couple, Dr and Mrs A.M. Sharrocks, in Sunchun.⁴⁵

With their emphasis on individual religious conversion, rather than righteous hate of the injustice brought about by the social and political structure and by foreign invasion, the western missionaries in the early mission in Korea appear to be instructing the Choson Christians that they need to forgive the actions of Japan. Indeed, following Japan's victory in the Japanese-Russian War, when Korea lost its status as an independent nation and all the foreign envoys returned to their home countries, the missionary William Newton Blair (1876-1970) wrote that:

In August 1906, we missionaries of Pyengyang, realizing the gravity of the situation, met together for one week of Bible study and prayer.... We felt that the Korean Church needed not only to repent of hating the Japanese, but a clearer vision of all sin against God, for many had come into the Church sincerely believing in Jesus as their Saviour and anxious to do God's will, without great sorrow for sin because of its familiarity. We felt that the whole Church, to become holy, needed a vision of God's holiness, *that embittered souls needed to have their thoughts taken away from the national situation to their own personal relation with the Master.*⁴⁶

This urging of Korean church members who had experienced the national tragedy of foreign invasion and annexation to turn and forgive, emphasizes their Christian faith and individual relationship with the Lord for their redemption. At the same time, Blair seems to overlook the aspect of Korean Christians' national identity as citizens of Choson, Korea and its sense of responsibility as a national political subject.⁴⁷ This can perhaps be explained by the dominance of Moody's petic theology, whereby individual conversion will eventually change the structure of the system.

It was in these circumstances that Annie Baird, Jean Perry, Ellasue Wagner and Lillias Underwood were working and writing, and their main narratives reveal a theological stance that is mostly conservative, focused on individual conversion, rather than social structure

⁴⁴ See Kang Sunmi, *Study on the Rise of Feminist Consciousness at the Turn of the 20th Century in Korea* [Hankukui keundaichogi feminism yeongu], 142-146.

⁴⁵ Richard H. Baird, *William M. Baird of Korea: A Profile* (1968, Yonsei University), 87.

⁴⁶ W.N. Blair and B.F. Hunt, *The Korean Pentecost and the Sufferings which Followed* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1977), 66-67. (My italics.)

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

and its reform. For example, Ellasue Wagner's stories in *The Korea Mission Field* (KMF), published mainly in the 1920's, when the people of Korea were subject to Japanese control and without their rights and freedoms as Korean citizens, are characterized by an emphasis on individual religious conversion without any structural concern on the society of Korea. The female characters in these stories, such as Aggie in 'Aggie Comes Home: A true story of thirty years ago,'⁴⁸ Mrs Ye Ye Wesin in 'The Weak Things of the Earth, Chapter V: Hephzibah, No more Forsaken,'⁴⁹ and Chung Tak Heui in 'The Weak Things of the Earth: Chapter VI: the Story of Chung Tai Heui,'⁵⁰ are typical examples. In Wagner's stories, the women characters suffer poverty combined with psychological or spiritual anxiety, and these circumstances form the context for their encounter with and conversion to Christian belief. Their conversion is dealt with in individual terms, or sometimes within the confines of a family, but not beyond it. That there is rarely any consideration of the protagonists' political identity as members of a national or regional community further underlines Wagner's individual-oriented evangelism, and lack of interest in wider political or social circumstances.

This individual-oriented evangelism is further reflected in the main narratives, though it may differ in its degree among the narratives. For example, Anne Baird's *Daybreak in Korea* tells the story of an individual woman character, Pobai, and her conversion in relation to her creation of a fulfilling Christian home. Although the narrative touches upon the stories of some local people, it contains no hints as to socio-political background, and does not refer to circumstances beyond the country village, despite the Korean people's suffering over the ongoing political turmoil.⁵¹ Similarly, while Jean Perry's *The Man in Grey* refers in the preface to political and cultural changes in Korea, these do not feature in the narratives. Lillias Underwood in *Fifteen Years Among the Top Knots* deals with guerrilla activity in 1894, incited by righteous discontent against the corruption of the government officers and seeking social and political reform. However, Underwood seems not to have any clear understanding of the people, referring to them simply as a 'mob'.⁵² Ellasue Wagner's *Kim Su Bang*⁵³ is the only text that makes direct reference to the Japanese-Russian War (1904) and the consequent 'rebel' or 'insurgent' activity in the

⁴⁸ KMF 29-2, pp.26-28, 1933.2.

⁴⁹ KMF 24-1, 1928.1, pp.6-9.

⁵⁰ KMF 24-2, 1928.2, pp.35-37.

⁵¹ See the publishing year 1909 of Baird's *Daybreak in Korea* was about the time that Korea was forced to be in involuntary annexation with the imperial Japan, that was formalized in 1910.

⁵² See Lillias Underwood, *Fifteen Years Among the Topknots*.

⁵³ See Ellasue Canter Wagner, *Kim Su Bang*, 33-34.

country. However, even in that story, the eponymous main character does not take any particular side in the conflict, neither for the Japanese invaders nor for the Korean rebels, as if indicating implicitly the non-political or neutral standpoint of the author herself.⁵⁴

While the narratives show little concern on politics, they make frequent reference to biblical texts, often with a literal interpretation,⁵⁵ in line with the authors' conservative theological standpoint. In Ellasue Wagner's *Pokjumie*, for example, Bible verses feature repeatedly as the key guide for Pokjumie as she suffers personal turmoil and the trauma of being sold as a concubine for Na Sung Mung.⁵⁶ Annie Baird's *Daybreak in Korea* also makes frequent use of Bible verses and their literal interpretation in relation to Pobai's conversion and membership of the chapel.⁵⁷ In another context, Lillias Underwood clearly indicates her support for a conservative view and concern regarding what she saw as the negative influences of liberal theology, especially in the mission field:⁵⁸

Young men are taught Homiletics and Church policy, are made acquainted with all sorts of doctrines and creeds, all too many of them emerge learned and philosophical, and able to criticize the Bible, full of 'new thought' and of 'profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called.' Often they are not sure of the inspiration of the Bible, or the divine birth of Christ or of His resurrection, or of the atonement, and naturally *few of them have any fire*. Not only have they learned doubt, and experience its chilling deadening results upon mind and soul, but their education along evangelistic lines has been neglected.

Meanwhile, in 1905 Jean Perry has attended Keswick Convention in England,⁵⁹ which was known to have an evangelical and conservative orientation, as its 'official' teaching was that Christians, although justified by the grace of Christ, are still under the dominion of sin. With an emphasis on the necessity for the Holy Spirit to countervail against the power of sin, in America this Holiness movement was adopted into the Student Volunteer Movement that attracted many young missionaries seeking Scripture-centred Christian discipleship and a life of holiness filled with the Holy Spirit.

⁵⁴ See Kim Su Bang, 33.

⁵⁵ Cf. Sebastian C.H.Kim, 'The Word and the Spirit: Overcoming poverty, injustice and division in Korea', *Christian Theology in Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 130-134.

⁵⁶ In the book, Scripture verses are used with a literal interpretation: 'Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.' (Ellasue Wagner, *Pokjumie*, 80). The title of Chapter 15 is resonates with Scripture: 'Not As the World Giveth, Give I Unto You' (*ibid.* 88).

⁵⁷ Annie Baird, *Daybreak in Korea* (New York, 1911): Pobai hears from the missionary the Bible verses that lead to her conversion to Christianity: 'For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but should have eternal life.' 'Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.' (73)

⁵⁸ L.H. Underwood, 'Does the Development of the Ministry Tend to the Downfall of the Church?' *The Korea Mission Field*, General Council of Evangelical Missions in Korea(ed.), (March, 1910), 69-71.

⁵⁹ See Perry, *Twenty Years A Korea Missionary*, Reprint from *Life of faith*, (London, S. W. Partridge, 1911), 24-26.

In summary then, central to the Anglophone foreign mission around the late 19th century was the western-centred ideology of ‘manifest destiny,’ upon which Protestant evangelicals revived the foreign mission movement in order to fulfil the Christian republic in the world. The foreign mission movement at this time was notable not least because of the unprecedented participation of women, partly thanks to their higher education and the lack of career opportunities for them in their home society in the west. From 1870 onwards, women acted in the mission field not just as the wives of male missionaries, but also as professional single female missionaries, and their activities for the indigenous women in the ‘heathen’ societies were prevalent in the late 19th and early 20th century. With regard to their theological background, many of the western missionaries appointed in the early mission in Korea were influenced in the late 19th century revival movement led by Moody, who emphasized personal sins and individual conversion. In line with this theological stance, the female missionaries, Baird, Perry, Wagner and Underwood, were conservative, oriented on individual salvation, and used the Bible as the key medium of all of their activities, as demonstrated in their main narratives.

1.2. The female missionary authors

The women missionary authors discussed in this thesis were of diverse Protestant denominational backgrounds. Annie Baird came to Korea as the wife of missionary William Baird, from the American Presbyterian Church. Ellasue Wagner was a single missionary appointed to Korea in 1904 by the mission board of the Episcopal Methodist Church in America. Jean Perry was British, but had moved to Australia and came to Korea initially as a single female missionary from the Presbyterian Church, then in 1896 she engaged herself as an independent missionary for social and educational work, forming a British evangelical mission society with her colleague Ellen Pash. Lillias Horton was appointed as a medical missionary by the American Presbyterian Church in 1888, and continued that work after her marriage to the Reverend Underwood in 1889. All of them, however, began their mission activities during the age of late Confucian Choson, and they all encountered Korean Confucian culture and religion against their differing religious, cultural and geographical backgrounds.

1.2.1. Annie Baird

Annie Baird (1864-1916) was from a relatively comfortable and well-educated farming family in Decatur County, Indiana.⁶⁰ Her father Jacob Clendenin Adams was a farmer, school teacher, and leader of a farm organization. Her mother Nancy McCoy Hamilton was also from a middle class farm family. Annie was one of eight children. The family of Annie Baird had a high education family background, the five daughters in the family all attended Miss Peabody's Female Seminary. This Western Female Seminary was part of the start of solid colleges for women in America, later to be Western College for women, at Oxford, Ohio. Annie studied there for one year, and changed to Hanover College (co-educational), 1883-4, and then Washburn College, 1884-5.⁶¹

Annie Baird and her younger brother, Adams James Edward (1867-1929), were both involved in the Korean mission, with him coming to Korea as a Presbyterian missionary in the year 1895 and serving in Taegu, Korea until 1923.⁶² Annie Baird had arrived four years earlier, in 1891, accompanying her husband William M. Baird (1862-1931).⁶³ William, an early American Presbyterian missionary of evangelical Protestantism in Korea, was born in Indiana on 16 June 1862, and graduated from Hanover University with a bachelor's degree in 1885. He continued his studies at McCormick Theological Seminary and graduated in 1888, but returned to Hanover to study for a doctorate, which was awarded to him in 1903, and became a Doctor of Divinity in 1913. His striving for learning and higher education did not cease, and in Pyeong Yang his pre-academy classes became Soongsil academy, grown into the Soongsil college, where it soon was given the status of an institution of higher education, where the first students graduated in 1908. One of his pioneering missionary methods was his 'Sarangbang' (guest room) through which he provided a space for evangelizing the natives (Koreans) effectively, which turned out to be successful.

Annie Baird began her own educational Korean mission activities very early on. From 1891 until the year of her death in 1916 she was much more than a companion to her missionary

⁶⁰ See R.H. Baird, *William M. Baird of Korea: a Profile* (Seoul:1968), trans. I. Lee, *Baiyuiryang paksau Hankuk Sungyo* (Seoul:2004), 16-24.

⁶¹ See R.H. Baird, *William M. Baird of Korea: a Profile* (Seoul:1968), 3-4.

⁶² See Seungoh Ahn, 'Daegujiyeok sungyoui sungyoui abeoji james adamseui saengaewa sungyo' [Life and mission of James E. Adams the great father of Daegu mission], *Sinhakgwa mokhoi* [Theology and Ministry] Vol. 30 (2008), 237-268.

⁶³ See R.H. Baird, *William M. Baird of Korea*. See also, William M. Baird, *Williambaird's Sungyoreport* [William Baird's Mission Report], trans. Kim Yong jin (Seoul, 2016).

husband, but was herself working with women and children, leading Sunday Schools and organizing gatherings, especially for women. Her contribution to literature and language had significance for her missionary works and supported and complemented her husband's activities in the founding and leadership of Soongsil School and University. Annie Baird took great efforts to translate American school textbooks into Korean and to compile new textbooks in Korean. She also became known as a language teacher for fellow missionaries and teachers. Her book *Fifty Helps for the Beginner in the Use of the Korean Language*, published in 1897,⁶⁴ was known as the best book for foreigners to learn the Korean language. We know that she herself taught Korean language classes to newly arrived missionaries, and she had an impact on the liturgy, as she translated several American Protestant hymns into Korean. She received great praise for her translation in 1895 of the well-known hymn 'As I have gone astray, I am now weak and weary', or *Meolli meolli gakdeoni Cheoryanghago Gonhayeo*, as it gave much comfort to many Koreans, and was turned to particularly at times of political turmoil, such as the funeral of Queen Min, killed by the Japanese in 1897, the *Eulsa* Protectorate Agreement with Japan in 1905, and Korea's annexation by Japan in 1910. The hymn also was known to have been based on her personal background, as she was in sorrow upon the loss of her first child Nancy Rose Baird (1892-1894), while her husband was away from home on a long mission trip. The hymn was thus a longing prayer for her husband's safe return as well. Baird later in 1903 lost her next child, Arthur Faris Baird (1901-1903).

In 1908 she was diagnosed with cancer, and went to America to receive radiotherapy at the Johns Hopkins University, but returned to Korea as soon as she could, only to suffer a relapse in 1915. Against the advice of family and friends she stayed in Korea, in order not to disrupt her husband's mission work, but died and was buried in Pyeongyang in 1916, from where she was later moved to Yangwhajin, Seoul.⁶⁵

In 1909 Annie Baird published her first novel, *Daybreak in Korea*, which was to remain one of her most important works and her major achievement.⁶⁶ It is the story of Pobai, a young

⁶⁴ A re-edited version as fourth edition was printed by the Furuin Printing Co., Yokohama, 1911.

⁶⁵ See R.H. Baird, *William M. Baird of Korea*, 86

⁶⁶ Annie Baird's writings have been reviewed and studied by only very few scholars, notably H. Choi, H. Yi, and I. Yi. See H. Choi, 'Missionary Zeal in a Transformed Melodrama: Gendered Evangelicalism in Korea,' *The Asian Journal of Women's Studies*, Vol.7, no.1, (2001), 7-39, and *Gender and Mission Encounters in Korea: New Women, Old Ways* (California, University of California Publishing, 2009); H. Yi, 'Pobai and Ewa: the comparison of the two women characters in Annie Baird's *Daybreak in Korea* and Arthur Noble's *Ewa*: A

Korean girl from a traditional neo-Confucian family living in a poor rural village in Choson. Married off as a child by her father, she is portrayed as living a life of misery. After her marriage she is taken to her bridegroom's house, where her days are filled with drudgery, a wife subordinated to a husband who is at best indifferent to her, and sometimes even hostile. After his sudden death, Pobai is sold by her in-laws to her second husband, Mansiki, a violent despot. Seeking comfort and meaning, Pobai turns in vain to the *mudang* Sim Ssi, the village representative of the native and traditional religion. Disappointed, she finally turns to the agent of western religion, the missionary church, for the solution to her seemingly meaningless and comfortless life. Pobai's conversion to Christianity transforms her life, which eventually moves her husband Mansiki to conversion, leading them to build a happy Christian home. Pobai's conversion then leads eventually the conversion of Pobai's family and relatives, including her grandfather, the eldest Confucian patriarch.

Baird's later book, *Inside Views of Mission Life*, published in 1913, is important complementary reading for understanding the author's missionary circumstances. It deals with the life of the missionary, with some suggestions in regard to the 'inner workings of the missionary's mind, heart and soul' for the daily service in mission.⁶⁷ As such, it might have proved a good guide for those new to the mission field. The subjects dealt with include 'missionary temptations', 'missionary trials', 'missionary diversion' and 'missionary joys'.⁶⁸

Annie Baird was also the author of two short stories, written in Korean and published in Seoul. 'Ko Young Gyu Jeon' is a story of a Korean male, Young Gyu Ko, whose life is transformed after his conversion to Christianity. It is particularly interesting to see how Baird describes his wife Bobae, and their life as a couple. 'Bu Bu ui Mo Bon' is also about a Korean couple, but they are Christians and serve as an ideal model of conjugal relations. It is noticeable that both of the stories in the Korean language deal not just with female characters, but with couples. These stories, clearly aimed at a Korean, and perhaps Korean Christian, readership, differ in intention from the novels written in English, as they seem to have served Christian catechetical purposes, rather than seeking support from home for the Korean mission.

Tale of Korea' (2008); I. Yi, 'Annie Baird's Mission Literature World,' *Munhakgwa jonggyo* [Literature and Religion], Vol. 13 (2008), 225-250.

⁶⁷ Annie Baird, *Inside Views of Mission Life* (Philadelphia, Westminster Press: 1913), 3.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* 5.

1.2.2.Ellasue Wagner

Ellasue Wagner (1881-1957), born in Virginia Huntersville, was the daughter of a preacher.⁶⁹ She graduated from Marion Junior College and Martha Washington College, which later became Emory and Henry College. She also studied at Scarritt College, established for the purpose of training young women missionaries, and graduated from there with a Master's degree. Given her social and educational background, her decision to become a missionary seems natural. In 1904 the Holston Conference sent her to Songdo, the former capital city of Korea. There, together with Miss Arrena Carroll, she purchased a Korean conventional house (24x8feet) and opened a school for 12 girls. It was the first girls' school ever established in Songdo. The school grew and developed into the Holston Institute under the leadership of Wagner, which would become the largest girls' school conducted by the Methodist Episcopal Church, South.⁷⁰ As of 1925, the school counted 1,087 pupils, of whom 170 were in the high school department, 620 in the primary school, and 297 in the kindergarten.

Due to her mother's ill health, Wagner returned to America in 1920 and remained there until 1923. She then returned to Korea, serving in social evangelical institutions for women, for example in Songdo, 'Ko Rya Ya Ja Kwan' (1924-5 and 1937-8), and in Seoul, 'Tai hwa Ya Ja Kwan' (1926-1934). What's notable upon her career as a woman missionary is that in 1931, she was ordained with 13 other women missionaries as a *moksa* (pastor) by the Korean Methodist Conference. After taking a leave of absence from 1935 to 1937, she served to supervise Seoul *bukjibang* (northern region), the women's missionary business, and in 1938 she was appointed as principal of Holston *yeo ko bo* (Girls'school) again. Her missionary work was continued until 1940, when she was forced by the Japanese to return to America.

With regard to her writings, it would include *Kim Su Bang and Other Stories of Korea* (1909), *Pokjumie: A Story of the Land of Morning Calm* (1911), *Kumokie: A Bride of Old Korea - A Love Story of the Orient* (1922), *Korea: The Old and the New* (1931) and the drama, *At the Hermit's Gate: A Presentation of some Events of 1883-1884* (1934).

⁶⁹ In the introduction to *Korea Calls: Pioneer Days in the Land of Morning Calm* (Bristol, TN, 1948), J.S. French mentions that E. Wagner, the father of Ellasue Wagner, was a great preacher (3).

⁷⁰ M.K. Howell, *Women and the Kingdom: Fifty Years of Kingdom Building by the Women of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1878-1928* (Nashville, TN, 1928), 135-6.

Wagner's writings were based on her mission experiences in schools and hospitals in Korea.⁷¹ The novels share a general theme of evangelism, centring on experiences of conversion and personal transformation, especially of female protagonists. For example, *Kim Su Bang* tells the stories of two women, Kim's wife, and Mary, his concubine (second wife). When Mary converts to Christianity, she and Kim realize that they need to sever their marriage ties, in order to conform to the Christian teaching of monogamy. Subsequently, Kim Su Bang exhibits his faith by taking his first wife to the western doctor for medical treatment, which eventually leads to her conversion. Wagner's novel *Pokjumie* shares similarities with the story of Pobai in Annie Baird's *Daybreak in Korea* in terms of its image of female victimization in the Confucian patriarchal system. Its emphasis, however, is on the issue of early marriage and concubinage, which Wagner considered a core problem, integral to the Confucian system in Choson, which would bring dishonour to girls and their families. While there was a prohibition against noble class women becoming concubines, unless forced to do so by severe economic difficulties,⁷² the very existence of this regulation shows that concubinage was not confined to the lower classes. Nevertheless, in the novel Wagner links concubinage directly to low social status. The life of a concubine was one of insecurity; the women had no protection and no rights, even with regard to their own children. Moreover, male children of concubines were barred from taking the government exams that were the only entrance to a career as a government officer in Choson.⁷³

The main character of the novel, *Pokjumie*, is taken in her childhood as a concubine to Tab Young Chang, a wealthy man of the noble class, who already has two wives. Chang then introduces another woman to his 'harem', a *Kisaeng* (woman dancer) who plots against *Pokjumie* so that she is expelled from the house. Once the plot is discovered, Chang tries and fails to find *Pokjumie*. On the road to be sold again into concubinage, this time to the wealthy Na, *Pokjumie* meets a western woman missionary and hears from her the Christian message. As a result, she rejects the new master Na and the harsh punishment she endures results in severe illness. In the meantime, Chang, after the death of his first wife, struggles to overcome his tragic circumstances, and becomes addicted to opium. He is taken for

⁷¹ See Park Jong Hyun, 'The birth of the modern Christian women in Korea, centering on Ellasue Wagner, the Methodist female missionary,' *Hankuk Gyohoi Sahakhoiji* [Korean Church History Society Papers], Vol.20 (2007), 95-122.

⁷² See M. Deuchler, *Confucian Transformation of Korea: A Study of Society and Ideology* (1992), Chapter 6: Confucian legislation: The consequences for women.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

treatment to the same Christian hospital where Pokjumie is a patient, and their reunification results in the two characters, now both converted to Christianity, establishing a Christian home together.

1.2.3. Jean Perry

Jean Perry (1863-1935) was born in St Mary's Cray near London, and grew up in Penn, Buckinghamshire.⁷⁴ When she was 19 years old, her family moved to Australia and settled in Gladstone. Her father worked in the Education Department of the region of Calliope, Queensland. For a while Perry occupied herself in the activities of the Presbyterian Church and Sunday School, but when both her parents fell ill and died, she faced a decision about her future.

Encouraged by the minister of the church she was attending, and ignoring warnings from the sister with whom she was staying that she was not strong enough, Perry was appointed as a missionary by the Presbyterian Women's Missionary Union. In 1891 she travelled to Pusan with two other single women, Miss Menzies and Miss Fawcett, and Rev. James H. Mackay and his wife, to serve under the Presbyterian Mission of Victoria, in the Australian Presbyterian Mission.⁷⁵ Perry's mission activities in Pusan were focused on married women and children: for women, she led worship every day, while teaching basic hygiene and medical treatment and running the class for candidates for baptism. She also took responsibility for the education and mission activities for Sunday School.⁷⁶ Perry then also was involved in taking up the work among the waifs, devoting herself for the orphans, evangelizing and educating them, who would otherwise have been in danger of being sold into bondage.⁷⁷

In 1896 Perry met Ellen Pash, a graduate of Girton College, Cambridge, who had worked for seven years as an officer in the Salvation Army in England, France, and India, and had

⁷⁴ See Jean Perry, *Twenty years a Korea Missionary*, 10.

⁷⁵ E. A. Kerr and G. Anderson, *The Australian Presbyterian Mission in Korea, 1889-1941* (Sydney: Australian Presbyterian Board of Missions, 1970), 9. For further information, see Yi Sang Gyu, 'The second string missionaries from Australia', in Yi Sang Gyu et al., *The First Missionaries in Pusan* (Seoul, 2007), 239-261.

⁷⁶ E. A. Kerr and G. Anderson, *The Australian Presbyterian Mission in Korea, 1889-1941*, 13. Until 1894, i.e. before her independent mission work at the orphanage in Seoul, Perry appears to have been much involved in evangelistic work, including instruction on medical aid and simple treatments, which was well received by many of the Korean women in the country villages in Pusan.

⁷⁷ *The Brisbane Courier*, 4 August 1897, p.3.

come to the East to see something of mission work at a missionary house of rest.⁷⁸ Although Pash was 14 years older than Perry, the two women became life-long friends. They travelled together to Australia, where they organized fundraising meetings and conferences, at which they would dress in Korean costume and sing hymns in the Korean and Indian languages.⁷⁹ Subsequently, they founded the independent 'British Evangelistic Mission', and opened a home for destitute children in Seoul.⁸⁰ There, they taught little girls how to read and write in Korean, and also taught the Scriptures, arithmetic, hygiene, needlework, and housekeeping. They then opened their cottage for neighbourhood prayer meetings. As the place soon grew too small to hold them all, they set up a separate home for boys, as well as the first school for the blind in Korea.⁸¹

The mission work of Perry and Pash was independent and non-denominational, and depended heavily on the financial and spiritual support of friends, acquaintances and backers at home.⁸² Consequently, reporting back to them on the progress of their mission work was critical. In 1906 Jean Perry published two mission narratives (novels), *The Man in Grey or More about Korea* and *Chilgoopie the Glad: A Story of Korea and Her Children*. In the years that followed she published *Uncle Mac the Missionary or More News from Korea*, and *Twenty Years a Korean Missionary, Reprint from Life of Faith*.

The Man in Grey describes the work of a western missionary couple in Korea, singling out a particular Korean family, old Mr Min and young Mrs Min, who are neighbours of the missionaries. Min becomes a co-worker, assisting the missionary Mr Bright. The story starts by describing the stereotypical 'oriental' Confucian family household of Mr Min, who is portrayed as a poor and 'incompetent' man, yet a member of the noble class, while his young wife is introduced as a miserable labourer burdened with heavy domestic work under the supervision of her mother-in-law. When the missionary Bright makes an evangelical trip with some Korean men to a remote village, Mrs Bright is left with her baby girl, who falls ill suddenly. By the time her husband has been informed and has rushed home, the baby is dead. The Mins suffer a similar tragedy, with the death of their baby boy; however, the

⁷⁸ *The Brisbane Courier*, 4 August 1897, p.3 and Jean Perry, *Twenty years of a Korea missionary*, 16-17.

⁷⁹ See *The Western Champion and General Advertiser for the Central-Western Districts*, 17 August 1897. Concerning the background of Jean Perry's mission activities, see *The Brisbane Courier*, 5 June 1897, 11; and *The Brisbane Courier*, 4 August 1897, .3.

⁸⁰ See *The Man in Grey*, 6, Their mission works at 'the garden for lonely children'.

⁸¹ Eun Ha Kim, 'The independent missionaries Jean Perry and Ellen Pash's education activities in 1890-1910', 教育問題研究 [*The Journal of Research in Education*], vol.37 (July, 2010), 1-21.

⁸² See Gigi Santow, 'Jean Perry: Twenty Years a Korea Missionary,' <http://anthony.sogang.ac.kr/transactions/VOL88/VOL88-08.docx>, accessed 1 Mar. 2017.

characters' faith only strengthens, showing how the transformation brought about by Christianity provides an unshakeable foundation to resist even the harshness of having lost their children.

This novel also introduces the character of Chilgoopie, a converted young Korean male, who was to re-appear as the protagonist of the author's other novel of the same year, *Chilgoopie the Glad*. In *The Man in Grey* Chilgoopie is mentioned as visiting the missionaries and joining in the funeral of their daughter, where he delivers a comforting message. As such he provides a model of Korean Christian ideal behaviour. This is not the only instance of Perry building on earlier narratives to develop them further in a new story. In her third novel, *Uncle Mac the Missionary or More News from Korea*, the missionary couple from *The Man in Grey* return from furlough and are shown continuing their ministry. The illustrations in Perry's books help the reader to visualize the events and people portrayed. For example, in *the Man in Grey* some men of Choson are shown with topknots, and this tells us that the story may have been set no later than around the end of the 1890s or so when the ordinance prohibiting topknots was issued and meant to implement it in Choson Korea. It is also interesting that Mr and Mrs Bright are seen visiting the (Korean) Children's Home near Seoul, run by two single women – no other than the writer herself and her companion Pash. Thus the reader has a direct glimpse of the writer as western woman missionary.

1.2.4. Lillias Underwood

Lillias Horton (later Lillias Horton Underwood) (1851-1921) was born in Albany, New York. She had a short, slight, delicate frame, and had a sickly childhood, suffering from rheumatism, which prevented her from continuing her studies after high school. However, years later, prompted by hearing a woman missionary speak about her experience in India, she entered Chicago Woman's Medical College and after three years of study, graduated and worked as a trained nurse in Chicago Children's Hospital. In March 1888, at the age of 37, she was appointed by the Presbyterian Church in America to serve in Korea, working as a medical missionary with women patients in Jejungwon Hospital in Seoul, while studying the Korean language.

In October 1888 she was invited to work as physician to Queen Min, and she continued to act as a friend and advisor until the Queen was assassinated in 1895. While her main mission field was in medicine, Lillias was also much interested in extending her mission via other routes, including evangelical trips. In 1889, with her new husband the Reverend H. G.

Underwood,⁸³ she embarked upon a pioneering tour through northern Korea. This honeymoon itinerary was then considered dangerous even for men, and the couple were advised not to undertake it. Nevertheless, they proceeded with the trip, during which Lillias held bible classes for women while the Reverend Underwood worked with men, and the tour was considered a great success.

In September 1890, Lillias Underwood gave birth to a son, Horace Horton Underwood (1890-1951). With no access to hired nurses, her husband the Reverend Underwood took care of mother and infant.⁸⁴ In February 1891, while the Reverend was away in Pusan to select a site for a new station, Lillias became very ill with her rheumatic fever, and doctors strongly recommended a sea trip to America as the only remedy. The family remained in America for two years, during which time they made many trips, telling the story of Korean mission in pulpits, in universities, in theological seminaries, and in student volunteer missions, gaining new missionary workers, founding a new mission society, and stirring new interest in Korea among the people of America, Canada, and England.

In 1895, cholera broke out near Seoul. Having returned to the city, Underwood continued treating infected patients, despite the filth and unsanitary conditions, while her husband took charge of an inspection office.⁸⁵ Lillias Underwood made an influence on Korean mission in many ways, including writing a number of historically valuable articles for the Korea Mission Field journal.

Underwood's representative writings include *Fifteen Years Among the Top Knots* (1904) and *With Tommy Tompkins in Korea* (1905), besides many articles and reports. *Fifteen Years Among the Top Knots*, written at the request of the American Tract Society, is composed of her own personal observations. It deals with topics such as the customs and character of Korean people, the Korean religions, Donghaks, and even the Queen's funeral. Much of the content appears to be based on the tour with her husband through northern Korea. As she writes in the preface, although some of the material is based on official reports and other documents, many contents were primarily based on her own 'personal observation.'⁸⁶ Underwood makes it clear that she did not intend to write a history of

⁸³ Horace Grant Underwood (1859-1916) was born in London, but emigrated to the United States at the age of 12. He graduated from New York University in 1881 and from New Brunswick Theological Seminary in New Brunswick, New Jersey, USA in 1884. He arrived in Korea in 1885, and was the founder of the Yonsei University.

⁸⁴ Lillias Underwood, *Underwood of Korea* (New York, Fleming H. Revell Company, 1918), 102.

⁸⁵ See Lillias Underwood, *Fifteen Years Among the Topknots*, 136-144.

⁸⁶ See Introduction by F.F. Ellinwood (v-x), and Preface (xi-xii) in *Fifteen Years Among the Topknots*.

Korean mission, but rather to put together ‘a few events which have fallen under her own personal observation.’⁸⁷

With Tommy Tompkins in Korea is written in the third person, telling her life story as a wife and mother, rearing her son Horace Horton Underwood (1890-1951) in the foreign mission land of Korea. In this book, Underwood describes ‘the home and every-day life of Westerners living in the far East,’⁸⁸ describing her real experiences and those of her family and friends living in Korea.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.* xi.

⁸⁸ Lillias Underwood, *With Tommy Tompkins in Korea*, 5.

Chapter 2. The Ideals of Victorian and Confucian Womanhood in the Encounter between Western Women Missionaries and Korean Women

Baird, Perry, Underwood and Wagner each had their own individual history, but all were middle-class women, brought up in the modern societies of 19th century America or Britain.¹ With the advent of the Industrial Revolution and the creation of new wealth, the western middle class adopted new ideals and characteristics, such as the work ethic, and a particular morality that included an ideal of womanhood in which women were expected to devote themselves to family and home in a separate domestic sphere.

In this Victorian model of femininity, the wife at home was subject to her husband, the master and the head of the household. This position is summarized in the words of Alfred Lord Tennyson: ‘Man for the field, woman for the hearth... man with the head and woman with the heart, man to command and woman to obey.’² The woman’s role was focused within the home as the centre of virtue, while the man’s role was that of breadwinner and his realm that of the outer commercial world. Women were not to do work outside the home, and were not expected to contribute to the family finances through employment. The husband held all the financial and economic rights. As a result, the social status of women declined, and widows or other women without a male ‘protector’ could be left in a vulnerable or even destitute position.³

Thus the Victorian ideal woman, although praised for her moral and spiritual excellence, was not viewed as equal to the ideal man. While the former was confined to the domestic sphere, the latter moved freely in the world of public affairs and politics. This social expectation often marginalized women, privatizing their activities, preventing them from voicing opinions, and denying them employment and legal rights.⁴

¹ See Ryu Dae Young, *Chogi Miguk Sungyosa Yeongu 1884-1910* [Research on the Early American Missionary in Korea 1884-1910]. Ryu maintains that the foreign missionaries, especially those from America, who came to Korea from around the 1880’s through to the 1910’s, were usually of the educated middle class.

² Alfred Lord Tennyson’s poem ‘The Princess’ (originally published in 1847), in Lucius Adelno Sherman (ed.), *Tennyson’s the Princess* (New York, 1900), 76.

³ See Clara Augusta, ‘Alice B. Haven: A Perfect Woman, nobly planned.’ in *Godey’s Lady’s Book and Magazine*, Philadelphia, vol.68. (January, 1864). 50-68.

⁴ Catharine Beecher (1800-1878) does not deny women’s equality with men in terms of their intelligence and moral worth, but she understands the role of women as different, and inferior to that of men. She claims that it is divinely ordained that women should guide morality in the domestic realm, and that men should be the head of the household and breadwinner. See Catharine Beecher, *An Essay on Slavery and Abolitionism, with reference to the Duty of American Females*. Second Edition. (Henry Perkins & Co.: Philadelphia, 1837), 184. See also Catharine Beecher, *Woman’s Profession as Mother and Educator, with Views in Opposition to Women’s Suffrage* (Philadelphia: G. Maclean, 1872), 98, 183-4.

Despite this subordinate status, evangelicals in late 18th and early 19th century England (and America) believed that women were allotted to a special role both in the family and in society. The woman's purity and piety would enable her to act as a spiritual and moral advisor and counsellor, to set an example to her husband and nurture his spiritual life, a role that bestowed some authority and respect in their own sphere. Further, despite their limited access to society, women could exert a moral influence upon it through work in the areas of charity and religion, such as evangelism and the temperance movement.

The roles of women missionaries in a foreign land, typified as 'Woman's Work for Woman', were understood as an extension of this ideal of Victorian womanhood and its moral influence, 'rescuing' 'less fortunate sisters' in non-western society by evangelizing and transferring the ideal through their cultural transfer of American (western) women's domestic responsibilities to non-western societies.

Yet while the female missionaries enjoyed relative freedom and independence while overseas, and exercised religious cultural authority over the 'heathen' native women (and men),⁵ this did not change their subordinated status in their churches. Missionary women who went back to their homeland to share their stories were often not allowed to speak in public, whether to tell their stories or to preach, a stark contrast with their experience in the mission field, where they were often seen as authoritative figures worthy of honour and respect.⁶

Even in the mission field, female missionaries, whether single or married, were asked to keep to their 'proper' place according to the standards of that time. For example, Mable Katharine Howell⁷ writes about the antagonism of bishops and male pastors, who objected to every form of 'woman's rights'. Howell also indicates the timidity of female officers in the Texas conference of the Methodist Church, quoting a Texas historian, who stated that:

⁵ Mattie Wilcox Noble, wife of the Methodist missionary W. Arthur Noble, records in a diary entry dated Nov. 14, 1892. how her hired Korean servant eagerly prepared a way for the missionary couple through a throng of local people, shouting to all, regardless of class or station, that the 'heaven' persons were on their way. (See *Journals of Mattie Wilcox Noble, 1892-1934* (Seoul: Institute of Korean Church History Study, 1993), 19. Similarly, Lillias Underwood writes of her reception when on a mission tour with her husband, Rev. Underwood: 'in places where the little groups of [Korean] Christians were found was always the same overjoyed, almost adoring welcome. By them, they [Lillias Underwood and her husband] seemed to be regarded as almost more than human. They were like angels who had come to them with the news of that wonderful Hope that opened out vistas of eternity and heavenly glory' (*With Tommy Tompkins*, 279).

⁶ See Catherine A. Brekus, *Strangers & Pilgrims: Female Preaching in America, 1740-1845* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998). Brekus states that while many women in the Evangelical Free Church and the Church of God worked as travelling evangelists, they were never given the same authority as male ordained ministers. In the early 1900's, some Pentecostal women became preachers but, despite their popularity, they were eventually excluded from formal leadership positions (340).

⁷ See Mable Katharine Howell, *Women and the Kingdom: Fifty Years of Kingdom Building by the Women of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South 1878-1928* (Nashville, Tenn: Cokesbury Press, 1928), 64.

‘Noting the excessive timidity of the duly authorized delegates, the brethren graciously consented to lend their assistance by frequently nominating the officers.’⁸ This picture of women’s reticence, contrasting with the attitude of male missionaries, is reflected in Perry’s *The Man in Grey*, with specific reference to the old Korean society of Choson.⁹

Most of the women missionaries appear not to have shown any radical rejection of this situation. Rather, they seem to have accepted the patriarchal social norm, and did not dare challenge it, making little effort to improve their own status. There were a few exceptional women missionaries who protested against it. ‘Lottie’ Moon,¹⁰ for example, did not concede the logic of women working only for women. In order to get more ‘tangible, visible results’, she thought that she needed to reach the men of the community too.¹¹ Concerning voting rights for women missionaries, Moon stated clearly that: ‘To exclude the unmarried ladies would be a most glaring piece of injustice in my opinion. To such exclusion I could never submit and retain my self-respect.’¹²

For most of the women who served as missionaries in Korea, however, the opportunity to work in mission, alongside men, was considered as a kind of privilege, a chance to achieve a newly established and well-paid ‘professional’ position. These women were involved in a joint task with men in a shared field, but one that had little to do with any structural concept of gender equality. What was emphasized in terms of their mission work was their devotion, sacrifice, and service¹³ rather than any matters with regard to women’s rights, and the issue of women’s inequality with men in an institutional perspective was considered at best secondary, or rather as being unimportant or even counter-Scriptural.

2.1. Western women missionaries’ female characters and the Victorian ideal of womanhood

The missionary female characters in the narratives appear to be proposing an ideal Christian woman, in whom domesticity is aligned with late Victorian womanhood. This might seem astonishing, given that the narratives were published around the late 19th and early 20th

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *The Man in Grey*, 108-109.

¹⁰ ‘Lottie’ Moon (1840–1912) was an American teacher and evangelist working as a missionary to China with the Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Church.

¹¹ Barbara Welter ‘She Hath Done What She Could: Protestant Women’s Missionary Careers in Nineteenth-Century,’ *American Quarterly* 30 (1978), 634-5.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ See Jane Hunter, *The Gospel of Gentility: American women missionaries in turn-of-the-century China* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1984), 87-88.

century, when the movement for women's rights had already made its way into the consciousness of many women and some men in the Anglo-American West. As early as 1869 John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor Mill had published *The Subjugation of Women*, where gender inequality was branded a relic of the past, with no place in the modern world. According to this text, 'the legal subordination of one sex to another – is wrong in itself, and now one of the chief hindrances to human improvement'; moreover, 'it ought to be replaced by a system of perfect equality, admitting no power and privilege on the one side, nor disability on the other.'¹⁴ The non-conformist Mill was known not only in Britain, but also in America, where in 1856 he was elected a Foreign Honorary Member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.¹⁵ Indeed, the last quarter of the 19th century was a period of great transformation for women, both politically in terms of suffrage and status, and socially, in terms of permissible dress and behaviour.

Although 'statistically the women who opted for the defence of their sex through piety enormously outnumbered those who opted for liberation,'¹⁶ women in this period began to be involved in socio-political issues such as trade unions, the fight against alcoholism and the abolition of slavery. And around the end of the nineteenth century, the ideology of New Woman began to play a considerable part, redefining gender roles and gender relations, and challenged 'the old codes of conduct and morality,' fighting against 'the traditional Victorian male perception of woman as the angel in the house.'¹⁷ Debates on the issues such as sex, marriage, women's suffrage and autonomy, women's employment made a contribution to changing women's lives.

Yet while the female missionary authors might appear to have stood outside the New Woman phenomenon, they do show some faint hints of feminism; while they portray an ideal of womanhood as good wife and wise mother, in line with the western Victorian concept, at the same time they raise their own voices and set pen to paper. No longer simply subservient to their male missionary husbands, they are emancipating themselves. Some, like Perry, are independent missionaries running children's homes; others, like Wagner, are headmistresses of girls' schools and advocates for equal education for female

¹⁴ J.S. Mill, *The Subjection of Women*, Fourth edition (London: Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1878), Chapter 1, p.1.

¹⁵ See *Book of Members, 1780-2010: Chapter M* (online available), <http://www.documentshare.org/natural-and-physical-sciences/book-of-members-1780-2010-chapter-m/>, accessed 7 Sept., 2014.

¹⁶ Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire 1875-1914* (London: Abacus, 1987), 210.

¹⁷ Andrzej Diniejko, 'The Victorian web: literature, history, & culture in the age of Victoria' <http://www.victorianweb.org/gender/diniejko1.html> accessed on 25 May, 2012. Diniejko maintains that the New Woman ideology and its fiction that appeared around the 1880s and 1890s arose 'out of Victorian feminist rebellion'.

members of society and for moving traditional Korean society towards modernity. Even if the novels depict the role of missionary wives and female missionaries as mostly traditional, this picture is belied by the female authors' liberal activities. Indeed, it is astonishing how little the authors seem to reflect their own standing as women at work in their writings. Perhaps, however, we need to read more carefully in between the lines.

In Annie Baird's narrative, *Daybreak in Korea*, for example, it is a male missionary who first conveys the Christian doctrine to Pobai. Although his wife is shown as seeking to deliver the new doctrine to other native women in the village, her evangelical effort is not as effective. This is explained in the novel as being due to her weakness in the Korean language, implicitly indicating that women are not equal counterparts of men. In Jean Perry's *The Man in Grey*, the missionary roles of Mr and Mrs Bright run clearly according to Victorian gender boundaries. It is the male missionary who does all the evangelical work, the preaching and touring of the village, while his wife is portrayed mainly as taking care of the 'home', exhibiting feminine virtues of nurturing. The image of the missionary wife is of a Victorian woman, the weaker sex, living under the protection of her husband. Only occasionally is she shown to lead a small evangelical meeting, and then only in the absence of her husband. In contrast, Ellasue Wagner's *Pokjumie* portrays a woman missionary conveying the gospel in her circular trip around Korea, and Pokjumie hears the doctrine of Jesus directly from her. Nevertheless, it is a male medical missionary who accomplishes the actual rescue of Pokjumie from her miserable situation.

Such a portrayal of the role of female missionaries is all the more astonishing, as research has shown that these women's real lives were far from being bound to the older Victorian ideal: a purely domestic female role model was often contradicted by the exigencies of the work of the mission field.¹⁸ Female missionaries worked largely beyond the private domestic realm, and this afforded them unusual freedom, especially when compared to their social standing in their home countries. The 'religious cause of Christian missions' provided 'a culturally acceptable forum for middle-class women in Europe and the Americas to gain organizational, fund-raising, and speaking experience in the public sphere'; hence 'missionary projects gave women a claim in their negotiations for political participation, social honor, and even monetary rewards.'¹⁹

¹⁸ M.T. Huber and N. Lutkehaus (eds), *Gendered Missions: Women and Men in Missionary Discourse and Practice* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 18.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* 20.

In many cases female missionaries took on roles which in the past had been associated exclusively with men. As early as the 1870s, in the Missionary Society in London, single women were professionally employed and became involved in what became more and more a new image of 'women's work'. While missionary wives had often been marginalized as 'amateurs' and were primarily defined by their 'domestic location', the 'working' wives exemplified a new female form of work that transcended the traditional picture.²⁰ Moreover, as missionaries lived and worked sometimes at the edge in a foreign land, men were not always able to insist on traditional male roles and gendered tasks. We even find an inversion of the older role model, where 'men had to perform domestic tasks or act as nurturers, and women frequently had to adopt masculine practices to cope with the demands of their environment'.²¹ In the mission field, 'women sledged, canoed, or rode on horseback to travel long distances, sometimes alone,' providing for missionary women both 'a physical freedom and a fluid space for experience and empowerment.'²²

However, this shifting and fading of gender boundaries was not achieved through any conscious choice or decision, and seems not to have been accompanied by a corresponding shift in attitudes among the female missionaries themselves. Rather, what we find in the novels is an adherence to more traditional concepts and ideals. Thus, we are faced with a tension between the traditional social norm of Victorian womanhood, and the actual relative independence and autonomy of the women missionary writers and others who were fully engaged in traditional male roles.

A further complicating factor is that, while the missionary women's lives did extend beyond the assigned realm of domesticity, it seems that they were still under the influence of missionary boards or sponsoring groups that were deeply embedded in the patriarchal social norms. In this patriarchal cultural context, women faced a situation in which, for example, 'their husbands ... expected the assistance, while clearly dismissing their wives' contributions as less important than their own', and mission hierarchies 'intertwined gender and power, and perceived the wives of junior missionaries to be subordinate to the wives of senior missionaries when neither of the wives was, in fact, employed by the mission.'²³ Their major roles of transferring familial obligations to the native women, and their

²⁰ J. Haggis, *Professional Ladies and Working Wives: Female Missionaries in the London Missionary Society and its South Travancore District, South India in the 19th Century* (PhD Thesis, University of Manchester, 1991).

²¹ Myra Rutherdale, *Women and the White Man's God: Gender and Race in the Canadian Mission Field* (Vancouver and Toronto: University of British Columbia Press, 2002), xxviii.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ See M.C. Singh, *Gender, Religion, and 'Heathen Lands,'* 96.

evangelical work²⁴ focused on engaging with women in the mission field, visiting local women and teaching children, were often treated as trivial, and were not well represented in official publications.²⁵

Single women missionaries were not exempt from such views. Within ‘a web of patriarchal structures,’ their professionalism as females was often restricted. Their new gender commitment was subordinate to their sense of a religious mission, with ‘a divine imperative’ referring their mission activities to a patriarchal church and its male hierarchies.²⁶ This status of missionary women within the male-centred social norms of the late 19th century is reaffirmed by, for example, Allan Becher Webb, Bishop of Bloemfontein in Southern Africa in 1883, in his claim that: ‘All Sisterhood work, to be perfect, ought to be carried on with the real central power vested in the [male] Bishop. The work must be under *his* personal control as representing the Great Head of the Church ... not under the irresponsible rule of any *woman*.’²⁷

This position is further delineated by Catharine Beecher. Taking scriptures such as *Ephesians* 5:22-24 (‘Wives submit yourselves unto your own husbands as unto the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, even as Christ is head of the Church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the Church is subject to Christ so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything’) as an example, she claims the principle of female subordination, where the man is ‘the head, protector, and provider’ and the woman ‘the chief educator of immortal minds - man to labor and suffer to train and elevate woman for her high calling, woman to set an example of meekness, gentleness, obedience, and self-denying love’²⁸ Beecher is aware that ‘all men [humankind] are created free and equal and equally entitled to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness,’²⁹ but states that ‘it is not true that women are and should be treated as the equals of men in *every respect*. They certainly are not his equals in physical power, which is the final resort in *government* of both the

²⁴ A. Baird, in *Letter to Gussie* (6 March 1891), says that Mrs Heron (the wife of Missionary Heron) is ‘making a regular round of calls among the high class women’; she also mentions Miss Doty (a single female missionary) who is in charge of the school for girls. See also M.W. Noble, wife of the American missionary Arthur Noble, whose activities are reported in detail in her *Journals of Mattie Wilcox Noble, 1892-1934* (Seoul: Institute of Korean Church History Study, 1993).

²⁵ R.A. Semple, *Missionary Women: Gender, Professionalism and the Victorian Idea of Christian Mission* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2003), 199.

²⁶ M.C. Singh, *Gender, Religion, and ‘Heathen Lands,’* 234.

²⁷ The ‘Headship of Man’: Questions of Female Authority, in F. Bowie, and D. Kirkwood, and S. Ardener, *Women and Missions: Past and present: Anthropological and Historical Perceptions* (Providence, RI: Berg, 1993), 8.

²⁸ C.E. Beecher, *Woman’s Profession as Mother and Educator, with Views in Opposition to Woman Suffrage* (Philadelphia: G. Maclean, 1872), 183-4.

²⁹ *Ibid.* 186.

family and the State,³⁰ further claiming that it is not woman's mission to exercise any political role. She goes so far as to claim that women's suffrage is 'contrary to the customs of Christian people,' and that 'The more society has advanced in civilization and in Christian culture, the more perfectly have these distinctive divisions of responsibility for the two sexes been maintained.'³¹

For Beecher, the only role appropriate for women outside of the domestic sphere was that of teacher, which was seen as an extension of her role as educator at home. This view was critiqued by Angelina Grimke, a pioneer of women's rights and the abolition movement, who believed in a radical moral equality among individuals, regardless of sex or race, as the central message of Christianity.³² Similarly, Elisabeth Cady Stanton, who published *The Woman's Bible* in 1895, advocated equality on the basis of Scriptures, but pointed to the sharp restrictions on women: 'If the Bible teaches the equality of Woman, why does the church refuse to ordain women to preach the gospel, to fill the offices of deacons and elders, and to administer the sacraments, or to admit them as delegates to the Synods, General Assemblies and Conferences of the different denominations?'³³

However, at that stage, the nascent women's right movement was only just beginning to make inroads into attitudes in church circles.³⁴ It was Beecher's view that prevailed among the female missionaries, who were keen to reassure women that participation in the foreign mission movement was entirely within the province of a Christian mother precisely because she was a mother and a Christian. 'We do not ask you, dear Christian sister, to neglect any clear home duty.'³⁵ Women who joined in the missionary movement, especially missionary wives, were to provide an example as good mothers, fulfilling their obligation to provide moral and religious guidance to their families.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ An Address on Female Suffrage, delivered in the music hall in Boston, in December, 1870, *Woman's Profession as Mother and Educator*, 5-6.

³² See *Walking by Faith: the Diary of Angela Grimke 1828-1835*, ed. Charles Wilbanks (Columbia: Univ. of South Carolina Press, 2003). In the debate on the appropriate role of women, Grimke offers an analysis of human rights, not founded on sex, in the following propositions: 'All human beings possess rights because they are moral beings; All human rights are essentially the same because moral nature is essentially the same; No human being can be alienated from herself/himself; the title to oneself is perfect; Sex, being incidental, is subordinate to the primary and essential rights of moral being; Whatever is morally right (wrong) for a man, is morally right (wrong) for a woman; The public discussion of certain rights leads inevitably to the discussion of all rights'. Grimke claims that women have equal rights with men in terms of morality; therefore, women are not to be subordinate to men, and should participate in the public realm as well as the domestic realm. See Stephen Howard Browne, *Angelina Grimke: Rhetoric, Identity, and the Radical Imagination* (Michigan State University Press, East Lansing, 1999), 107-8.

³³ E.C. Stanton and the Revising Committee, *The Woman's Bible* (New York, 1895 = 1974), 9.

³⁴ See *ibid.* 8.

³⁵ *Our Mission Field: Woman's Work for Woman*, (Philadelphia: Woman's Foreign Missionary Society of the Presbyterian Church) 5 (Sept. 1875), 159.

Thus, although their lives in the mission field were full of adventure and well beyond the stereotypical Victorian women's life of domesticity, women missionaries defined themselves 'in opposition to women's rights activists.'³⁶ 'They hoped for heathendom what they had for themselves: not the vote, in general elections or even within the mission, but acknowledged pre-eminence in a separate world of piety, purity and domesticity.'³⁷ Women missionaries sought to take part in 'true womanhood', 'the blessings of wifehood', and 'the holy responsibility of motherhood', while the feminists sought to promote the equality of women with men, seeking the polls and the podium.³⁸ While they were willing to challenge the men of the oriental society as to its social norms of oppression and discrimination against the native women, it appears that they did not confront their own countrymen or male missionary counterparts as to the patriarchal structure of the churches and Christian institutions.

2.2. Choson Korean women and the ideal of Confucian womanhood

There are interesting parallels between the Victorian ideals of womanhood maintained by the western women missionaries and the Confucian-prescribed feminine ideal expected of Choson Korean women. In Confucian society, just as in the western Victorian norm, women were expected to fulfil an ideal of domesticity, and their sphere of action was confined to the home, where they would be engaged in housekeeping and caring for husband, children, and other family members. According to the Confucian gender ideology, just as in Victorian society, the man's place was *sarang* in Choson, the outside part of the house receiving guests and dealing with business; while the woman's place was inside, *anbang* in Choson. Men alone were considered as 'structurally relevant members' of society, relegating women to 'social dependence.'³⁹ Based on the Confucian patriarchal gender ideology, women's role and identity were bound to their men. Their social life was strictly controlled and limited mainly within their household, to the extent that they would be confined to an inner room, secluded and separated from the public realm.

³⁶ Jane Hunter, 'The Home and the World: The Missionary Message of U.S. Domesticity,' in *Women's Work for Women: Missionaries and Social Change in Asia*, ed. Leslie A. Flemming (Boulder, San Francisco, and London: Westview Press, 1989), 160.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ See P.R. Hill, *The World Their Household: The American Woman's Foreign Mission Movement and Cultural Transformation, 1870 – 1920* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1985), 36-7.

³⁹ Martina Deuchler, *Korean Women: View from the Inner Room*, ed. Laurel Kendall & Mark Peterson (New Haven: East Rock Press, Inc., 1983), 1.

One of the most influential documents relating to this Confucian gender ideology is *Naehun* (內訓), written for the instruction and edification of women in Choson by Sohe wanghu 昭惠王后 (1437-1504), mother of the Choson king Sungjong. It is in three volumes, the first of which comprises three chapters, dealing respectively with how Confucian women are to behave, how to serve and respect parents with *hyo*, and the many different kinds of rule that Confucian married women are to know and keep conscientiously. In more detail, the first chapter deals with four aspects of Confucian women's behaviour: 婦德 (women and morality), 婦言 (women and language), 婦容 (women and appearance), and 婦功 (women and skills). With regard to morality, it says that women do not necessarily have to be superb in intellect and talent. However, they must behave in a right way, keeping their loyalty to their husband. With regard to language, women do not necessarily have to be silver-tongued, but they must choose their words cautiously, and not use bad words. As for outward appearance, women do not need to be beautiful or pretty, but they must be clean, wearing clean clothes. Finally, women are not required to have excellent skills, but they are not to play or enjoy themselves without right reason, they must work industriously, and serve visitors or guests well. The second chapter, on how to serve parents well with *hyo* provides an important instruction in regard to the Confucian woman as a daughter-in-law, as it says that even if a son likes his wife very much, if his parents do not like her, their daughter-in-law, then she must be evicted from the house. On the other hand, even if the son does not like her, but his parents do because she serves them well, then, she must stay as the son's wife.⁴⁰

According to the Confucian gender ideology, Confucian (married) women were to maintain *Samjongjido* (三從之道).⁴¹ This concept encompassed the feminine duties of submission and self-denial, and referred to three stages of a woman's obedience to men: when young and unmarried to her father, when married to her husband, and when old and widowed to her son. Married Confucian women had to follow a rule called the seven evils (七去之惡),⁴² whereby if she were to fall into any one of the seven, she could be deserted and divorced by her husband. The seven evils were disobedience to her parents-in-law (不順父母), failure to bear a son (無子), adultery (不貞), jealousy (嫉妬), severe illnesses (惡疾), too much

⁴⁰ ‘子甚宜其妻，父母不說，出。子不宜其妻，父母曰：是善事我。子行夫婦之禮焉，沒身不喪。’ Queen Sohe, *Naehun*, Yook Wanjung (trans. and interpret.), (Seoul: Yeolwhadang, 1984), 57.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 75-76. Choson Confucian woman's three moral duties: before marriage she is to follow her father, when married her husband, and when widowed, her son.

⁴² *Ibid.*

chatting(口說), and stealing(竊盜). However, there was also a rule called *sambulgeo* (三不去),⁴³ that could protect women from a husband's demand for divorce, if she joined her husband in a three-year mourning period for his parents (與共更三年喪不去), or if she had nowhere to return to (有所取無所歸不去), or if she had made good financial management, such as to increase the material wealth of the household (前貧賤後富貴不去).

The ideal values for Confucian womanhood in Choson were based on subordination, self-sacrifice and obedience, encouraging and instructing women to be submissive to the patriarchal Confucian system. This subordinated status of Confucian domestic womanhood is shown clearly in some influential Confucian documents. For example, *Naehun* (內訓), mentioned above, says 'under the chapter of marriage (昏禮章), quoting Yegi (禮記) that men are to be ahead of women, as the sky is prior to the earth and the King to the subjects.'⁴⁴ Another influential text on the status of Confucian women is *Yeosasu* (女四書)⁴⁵ which defines ideal Confucian womanhood in terms of woman's place in the home and subordination and obedience to her husband.⁴⁶

In addition to, and in line with, this subordination of women and division of gender roles, Choson implemented a law separating Confucian women and men. This regulation, known as *Nae-Oe-Bub*, was intended to prevent imprudent relationships between women and men, and eventually had a huge impact on women, especially *yangban* women of the noble class, resulting in their confinement within the *anbang* (inner room) at home, where they were separated from all except their families and close relatives. When it was necessary for them to leave the house, they were carried within a palanquin or sedan chair to prevent any contact with others, or at the very least were covered with a *changoat* or hat.

As a result of this strict Confucian gender code, many Choson women suffered and struggled to survive. Some were the victims of mistreatment from their husband or parents-in-law, as reflected in the story of Pobai in *Daybreak in Korea*; some were cast out by their husband because of their failure to produce a male heir, while others suffered because their husbands engaged in extramarital love affairs with their concubines, as in the

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ “禮記에 이르되 男先於女는...天先乎地하며 君先乎臣이 其義一也라.” 昏禮章, *Naehun* (內訓), Yi Sungyoung, Yi Seounghee (trans. and interpret.) (Seoul: Cheryn Publishing House, 2011), 111.

⁴⁵ Originally compiled and annotated by Wangsang in the early Qing dynasty for moral instruction of women; translated and annotated in 1736 by Yi Deoksu in Choson; edited by Kim Jongchul and published in Seoul in 1966.

⁴⁶ See Kim Jongchul (ed.), *Yeosaseo* (女四書) (Seoul: 1966), which states that a woman must obey her parents before her marriage, and her husband after marriage (46).

case of Lady Chang in *Pokjumie*. However, it would be wrong to assume that women in Choson were always powerless victims. Despite the patriarchal Confucian system in which Korean women were subordinate to men and marginalized in society, in the domestic sphere Korean women were ‘autonomous and active as the matrons of their households’, and showed themselves to be both strong and responsible.⁴⁷ In the home realm allowed to them, Choson women would ‘attain positions of power comparable to or greater than those of their husbands.’⁴⁸ Korean women, especially the mothers of sons,⁴⁹ often exercised a significant leadership role in their ‘inner’ sphere, and their domestic management would determine the harmony and prosperity of the household.⁵⁰ Meanwhile, some women in Choson tried to take advantage of the Confucian system and its ideology of gender, ‘develop[ing] strategies to secure for themselves and for their offspring the best means of survival.’⁵¹

Moreover, just as was expected by the Victorian ideal of womanhood, women in Confucian society, especially wives and mothers, were considered to exert a spiritual and moral influence upon their family. With regard to the western women, this role is illustrated by the case of the missionary wife in *Daybreak in Korea*, who takes upon herself the role of counsellor to Younggyu, the hired cook, advising him that he needs to meet his fiancée before he makes a decision on marriage.⁵² In *the Man in Grey*, Mrs Bright appears to give moral advice to her missionary husband, as to whether some of their Korean parishioners should be given employment as preachers. Mrs Bright asks her husband, ‘how can they afford to do that, and what about the families when they are gone?’, and advises caution: ‘don’t employ [Mr Min] at all yet, nor Mr Yi either...only let them decide themselves. They will be the stronger for it.’ Mr Bright accepts her advice.⁵³

Meanwhile, Confucian women were appreciated for their wisdom and *deok* (德) (morality or virtues) in their management of household matters. Yi Deok Moo (1741-1793), for

⁴⁷ Richard Rutt and Kim Chong-Un, *Virtuous Women* (Seoul: The Royal Asiatic Society, Korea Branch 1974), 15.

⁴⁸ Clark Sorensen, ‘Women, Men, Inside, Outside: The Division of Labor in Rural Central Korea,’ in Laurel Kendall and Mark Peterson (eds), *Korean Women: View from the Inner Room*, (New Haven: East Rock Press, Inc., 1983), 65.

⁴⁹ Cf. Haejoang Cho, ‘Male dominance and Mother Power: The Two Sides of Confucian Patriarchy in Korea,’ *Asian Women*, vol.2, (Spring 1996), 77-104.

⁵⁰ See Martina Deuchler, ‘The Tradition: Women during the Yi Dynasty’, *Virtues in Conflict: Tradition and the Korean Woman Today*, Sandra Mattielli (ed.) (Seoul: The Samhwa Publishing Co., LTD., 1977).

⁵¹ Martina Deuchler, *The Confucian Transformation of Korea: A Study of Society and Ideology* (Cambridge (Massachusetts) and London: Council on East Asian Studies, 1992), 281.

⁵² Baird, *Daybreak in Korea*, 114-115.

⁵³ Perry, *The Man in Grey*, 124-125.

example, in his book, *Sa So Jeol* (士小節),⁵⁴ writes that: ‘In the old days it was women’s role to persuade or encourage or urge their husband to be awake to see what is going on in reality. With women’s wisdom and moral influencing power, the husbands would often be saved or rescued from any wrongdoing.’⁵⁵ Not just the husband, but also the children, and even the parents-in-law came under the influence of women’s *deok*, and, if the woman exercised this well, the whole household would benefit.⁵⁶

In Wagner’s *Pokjumie*, coolie Cho’s wife reveals a glimpse of Korean women’s influential role in discussing matters on equal terms with their men. Although her will does not bend that of her husband, Cho’s wife is seen arguing with him after he has taken the apparently dying Pokjumie into their house for money. She harangues her husband: ‘Look here! ... I’m tired of this extra burden [Pokjumie] you brought home. You can never make any money out of that girl, anyway, because she is going to die in spite of all we can do. It’s five days now since you took her from the river, and she has never even opened her eyes or showed any sign of life except that queer sort of breathing.’⁵⁷ Coolie Cho’s wife shows no fear of her husband, answering back and engaging in a shouting match with him. Although, in this case, she does not prevail, here she does show how a strong Korean woman could challenge her husband and exert influence over him.

The moral influence of Confucian women is well exemplified in the following story, in which a noble woman finds her right place in a household of her own class, building up the family order in a right way:⁵⁸

In Choson, a wife of talents and wisdom is shown in the following to win respect and her lawful position. There was a high noble man whose wife passed away, leaving many children. The man was old, and it appears that remarrying in a formal way would have been difficult. However, a marriage was arranged with the daughter of a noble man who had fallen into poverty. On the day of the marriage, he saw his bride-to-be for the first time, and was shocked to see that she was short, ugly, and humpbacked; also, he believed, her mental quality left as much to be desired as her physical appearance. Disappointed, after a few days the man left the woman, leaving her in her place, not leaving any connection with her, and went back to his home in the capital city. Later the wife heard that the man had got a good position in the government and that his sons had married well, and he was giving a big feast in celebration, inviting many friends and guests to his house in the capital city. After hearing this, the wife, against her parents’ advice, travelled to the city and the place where the man lived. As soon as she got there, she went into the *anbang*,

⁵⁴ In 1775 the reformed Confucian scholar Yi Deok Moo (李德懋, 1741~ 1793) had written *Sasojeol* (士小節), which deals with the proprieties for men, women and children in their daily lives in Choson.

⁵⁵ Yi Deok Moo, *Sasojeol* (士小節), trans. by Yi Donghee (Seoul, 2013), 142.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 142-144.

⁵⁷ Ellasue Canter Wagner, *Pokjumie: A Story from the Land of Morning Calm* (1911), 44-45.

⁵⁸ CH. Dallet, *Histoire de L’eglise De Coree*, Introduction, CXXIV, CXXV, CXXVI (Paris, 1874) (my translation and summary).

and ordered her daughters-in-law, and reprimanded the sons for not acting properly towards her, beating them on their calves in the usual way for a mother to train her own sons. Afterwards, all the people there came to know what had happened, and finally the man was to accept her as his wife as well.

However, while the Victorian Christian ideal of womanhood was amongst other factors like wealth, education, rural or urban environments primarily based upon and defined by gender, as can be seen from the writings of Catharine Beecher (1800-1878),⁵⁹ in the case of Confucian Choson women the situation was even more complicated. There, in addition to gender and the other factors mentioned, prominently class, age and generational factors were very important, and could impact the status of Confucian women in a number of different ways. For example, the class system in Confucian Choson was extremely influential, and could outweigh gender in determining the status of woman. Even after 1895, when the Choson government implemented the *Gabo* reform, class remained one of the most important considerations in regulating Confucian society. Men and women were identified and defined by their membership of castes, such as *yangban* (noble), *jung-in* (middle), common, and humble. Women of the noble class were clearly in a superior position to men of the lower classes, and the interplay of the class system with gender norms often made for a complicated picture of Confucian womanhood in Choson. Within their own class, discrimination among men and women was not too severe. Rather, relationships between the two sexes were to be based upon the principle of non-interference, with mutual respect, and males and females each having their own independent housing space (female-inside, male-outside), rather than upon men's exploitation of, or dominance over, women.⁶⁰

The age factor too was very influential in determining the status of Confucian women in Korean society. Older women received the respect due to their authority as mothers or mothers-in-law, while girls and young women, even when they were mothers, were often treated as subordinate to their husbands or male relatives.

⁵⁹ Although Beecher does not deny women's equality with men in terms of their intelligence and moral worth, she understands the role of women as different, and inferior to that of men. She states that the woman's role as moral guide is divinely ordained, as is the man's role as head of the household and breadwinner. See Catharine Beecher, *An Essay on Slavery and Abolitionism, with reference to the Duty of American Females*, Second Edition, (Philadelphia: Henry Perkins & Co., 1837), 184. See also Catharine Beecher, *Woman's Profession as Mother and Educator, with Views in Opposition to Woman Suffrage* (1872), 98, 183-4.

⁶⁰ Yi Sunhyung, Yi Sookin, Jung Oakja, and Ham Jaebong, 'chosonyeosungun eokapbatatneunga?' [Have the Choson Women been Oppressed?], *Jeontonggwa hyundai* [Tradition and Modernity], Vol. 4, (2000), 104-135, 114.

The authority of older women can be seen in an incident related in Perry's *The Man in Grey*, in which

two men were yelling at each other at the top of their voices, and each had simultaneously seized the top-knot of the other, and was tugging vigorously, while they carried on a most excited dialogue, with frenzy written on their faces... An old woman appeared on the scene suddenly, and, rushing up to one of the men, caught at his coat tail, and, pulling with all her might, yelled out, 'Stop that! I'll have no more of it. You've done nothing but eat all day, and now this to-do, all about nothing. You let my man alone, or I'll take his place, and get you by the hair of your head, and then you'll know it. Stop it, I say! What if I am a grandmother, I'm as strong as two such lazy-bones as you.' There was a laughter from the crowd as the two men, still glowering at one another, stepped to a respectful distance from the old lady.⁶¹

Here we see the authority of an old woman, a grandmother, successfully interceding on behalf of her own man, stopping a fight between two younger men. Like social class, so too the age factor could override considerations of gender in Confucian Choson. Older women could maintain positions of authority not just over younger women, but also over younger men. Mothers and mothers-in-law in Confucian Choson households often had a strong position with regard not just to their daughters-in-law, but also to their sons. Indeed, this was recognized by the important traditional Confucian moral concept of *orun*,⁶² which encompassed five ideal behaviours, of which one, *jangyuyuseo* 長幼有序, required that an aged person should always precede a younger one. This meant that one should respect older people, placing them in authority over the younger ones. Hence, mothers and mothers in law were to receive from their children the same care and respect as shown to their husband, a behaviour called *hyo* in Korean Confucian society, and were also to receive equal honour after death in Confucian ancestor worship, which required a mourning period of three years for both male and female parents. According to the Confucian ideal, children were required to venerate their parents, to honour and glorify them, ensuring that they had a decent life, and never bringing disgrace upon them.⁶³ Thus the position and power of a Confucian mother seems particularly significant,⁶⁴ even in comparison to that of a Victorian woman

⁶¹ Jean, Perry. *The Man in Grey or More about Korea* (London, 1906), 112-113.

⁶² *Orun* (五倫) refers to five moral duties to be observed so as to maintain good order in Confucian Choson society: *bujayuchin* (父子有親) means there should be intimacy between father and son; *gunsinyuui* (君臣有義) refers to integrity between sovereign and subject; *bubuyubyeol* (夫婦有別) demands differentiation between husband and wife; *jangyuyuseo* (長幼有序) is the required order between the aged and the young; *bungyusin* (朋友有信) calls for trust between friends.

⁶³ See *Liji jijie* 禮記集解. *A Collected Annotation of the Book of Rites*. edited by Sun, Xidan 孫希旦, (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1989), 1225.

⁶⁴ Quoting R.W. Guisso, Haejoang Cho argues that despite the strength of this maternal power in Confucian society, it did not act against the patriarchal system itself; rather it may often have acted as a way of 'accommodating' women under the patriarchal system, as 'mothers, whose ultimate concern lay in their sons'

and mother, whose position in marriage was one of coverture, entirely dependent upon her husband.⁶⁵

Moreover, with regard to the separate spheres of home and the outside world, while this division did exist in Confucian Choson, nevertheless the domestic realm was considered as the base to fulfil the public realm, and the two were sometimes considered as in a continuum, not strictly separate, but rather in a connected line. For example, *Susin Jega Chiguk Pyeongcheonha*, 修身齊家, 治國平天下 (cultivating self and regulating the household, ruling over the country and the world), drawn from *Daihak* (大學), one of four representative books for Confucianism, indicates that a man cannot attain public virtue to be effective as a true public leader unless he cultivates himself in moral virtue, internalizing the domestic virtues, regulating his household in peace and harmony. This implies that domestic virtues are fundamental and inclusive of public ones, which certainly elevates the importance of the domestic realm, as fundamental to work in the public realm.⁶⁶ In light of this it might not be too surprising that in Confucian Choson women carried out some roles in the public sphere, even though their main roles were in the domestic realm.

The following examples can help to give some idea of how, in Confucian society, the domestic realm was fundamental as the starting point to work in the public realm.

First of all, the family ritual of ancestor worship was originally directly related to the Confucian virtue of filial piety, a core duty for Confucians. The belief that ‘all things originate from Heaven, and humans originate from ancestors,’⁶⁷ is central to Confucian doctrine, which values respect and veneration toward ancestors, including parents, both the living and the dead. Ancestors and their spirits were considered to have the power to create

well-being, were made pillars of the social and familial establishment.’ Nevertheless, maternal power exercised a strong influence over not only the domestic realm, but also the public realm. See Haejoang Cho, ‘Male dominance and Mother Power: The Two Sides of Confucian Patriarchy in Korea,’ *Asian Women*, vol.2, (Spring 1996), 97.; Guisso, R. W. ‘Thunder Over the Lake: The Five Classics and the Perception of Women in Early China’, in *Women in China*, eds. R.W. Guisso and S. Johannesen (New York: Philo Press, 1982).

⁶⁵ On the system of coverture that underpinned the status of woman in Victorian England, Blackstone notes that ‘By marriage, the husband and wife are one person in Law; that is, the very being, or legal existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage, or at least is incorporated and consolidated into that of the husband under whose wing, protection and cover she performs everything.’ See William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (Oxford, 1765-69), Bk.1, Chap.15. Also available at the Avalon Project at Yale Law School, http://Avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/blackstone_bk1ch15.asp.

⁶⁶ Kim, Ki Hyeon maintains that the domestic realm in Choson Confucian society was not separated from the public realm, but belonged to the public realm as its beginning. This indicates that in some sense, the domestic and public realm were connected in a continuum. See Kim, Ki Hyeon, ‘Yugyo Sasange natanan Gonggwa Sau Uimi’ [The meaning of the Public and the Private in Confucian thought], *Dongasiaui Munwhawa Sasang* [The culture and thought of Eastern Asia], Vol. 9 (Seoul: December, 2002), 50-75.

⁶⁷ *Liji jijie* 禮記集解. A collected annotation of the *Book of Rites*. edited by Sun, Xidan 孫希旦, (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1989), 694.

either good fortune or bad for their descendants, based on their relationship to them.⁶⁸ Thus, during the Choson dynasty, ancestor worship in all its moral and cosmological aspects became a core form of family ritual in Korea, lasting until the introduction of Christianity. It was deeply significant in terms of connecting not only the ancestors and descendants of a family, but also all the living family members who were to be present for the ritual, creating a structural unity of the family. In Choson, maintaining family honour was considered an important duty, and the ritual of ancestor worship was a way to ensure this. Given the presence of all living members of the whole family, the ritual was, in some sense, a public function. As it was not possible without women, who were responsible for its preparation, we can see here that the woman's role went beyond domesticity, to deal with an important social function.⁶⁹

Secondly, for noble women, serving house visitors or guests was another important duty, for the noble class often believed that keeping their family name had to do with their keeping propriety (禮), which was displayed through virtuous and beneficent acts toward others. To have many house guests, to whom room and board were given for free, was considered as a token of the house master's virtue (德), giving honour to the whole family.

Wooam Song Siyeol⁷⁰ (1607-1689), in his *Gaenyeoseo* (戒女書), gives instructions to his daughter on how to serve house guests with propriety (禮):⁷¹

The guests that come to your house may be usually remote relatives or friends, so prepare good food for them. If you have fruits or alcoholic drink, then offer them as well... if you treat them badly once or twice, then, the guest will not come again to your house, and other guests also will not come. If that happens, your family's honour may begin to fade, and your husband and children may not be able to act as the master when they interact with others in the village, so please entertain the guest with hospitality, and treat them very kindly.

Entertaining house guests was not a purely private or domestic activity. It involved social or public gatherings, and was therefore an extension of the public realm, albeit within the

⁶⁸ See Jung Young Lee, *Ancestor Worship and Christianity in Korea* (New York: 1988), 16.

⁶⁹ See Lee Ki-Young, Kim Sunghee, and Lee Hyunah, 'Chosonsidai Namnyeogan Ganaenodong Bundam' [The Complementary Gender Division of the Household Work in the Yangban Class of the Choson Period], *Korean Family Resource Management Academic Journal*, Vol. 11 (Nov. 2011), 129-131.

⁷⁰ Confucian scholar and politician in Choson. His *Gaenyeoseo* (戒女書) comprises instructions to his daughter, who was about to marry. It contains 20 articles, on matters including how to serve parents, how to serve a husband, how to serve parents-in-law, how to prepare the family ritual of ancestor worship, and how to serve house guests.

⁷¹ Song Siyeol, *Wooam Sunsang Gaenyeoseo* (戒女書), Park Sungsu (annotated.), (Soonchang: Ohsanseodang, 2012), 9.

private space of the house.⁷² Once again, for these important social activities to take place, Confucian women were required to lead from the centre.

2.3. The comparative status of women in Confucian and Victorian society

In contrast to the representation of Choson women in the female missionary narratives, where they are shown to have generally low status, George William Gilmore (1857-1933), an American missionary in Korea from 1886 to 1889, maintained that:

Her husband and her children use what are called the polite or honorific forms in speaking to her. It is the habit of the men to consult their wives in matters of business, and the native shrewdness of the weaker sex is often manifested in the disposal of spare capital. Most people in Korea find, sooner or later, that the king pays good heed to Her Majesty's suggestions, and at times she does the talking, of course from behind a screen. In a word, in Cho Son, as in America, the lady of the house is a very important personage, and can do much to make home comfortable or the reverse, as she holds the key to the situation.⁷³

Here, Gilmore makes the case that Korean women occupy an elevated position, and defies what he considered a 'mistaken' impression, namely that these women were secluded and without power.⁷⁴ He notes that women were consulted by men 'in matters of business' and also had a say 'in the disposal of spare capital', yet when it comes to his notion of the woman as a 'very important personage,' he is referring not to the public realm of money and business, but to the home, and to women making 'home comfortable.' Here we see that his reinterpretation of the position of Choson women is made from a patriarchal Victorian perspective, in which the woman's realm is ultimately that of domesticity. Nevertheless, his admiration for the standing of women in Choson is still noteworthy, providing a positive perspective in contrast to the view expressed by the female missionaries.

As we read between the lines of these conflicting images, we find that Choson women actually enjoyed quite good standing. In Wagner's novel *Kim Su Bang and other stories of Korea*, for example, the Choson noble woman Lady Na seems to exert power over the household and its property, which included slaves as well as lands. The slave girl Mittome, sold to the wealthy lady Na owing to her own family's poverty,⁷⁵ incurs the dislike of her

⁷²Lee Ki-Young, Kim Sunghee, and Lee Hyunah, 'Chosonsidai Namnyeogan Ganaenodong Bundam' [The Complementary Gender Division of the Household Work in the Yangban Class of the Choson Period], 131-133.

⁷³G.W. Gilmore, *Korea from its Capital: with a Chapter on Missions* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication and Sabbath-School work, 1892), 149-150.

⁷⁴*Ibid.* 149.

⁷⁵The Korean scholar Chong Haeun maintains that the main reason behind the selling of girls in the late Choson was poverty, and that they were sold not for sex, as believed by many westerners, but for labour. See Chong Haeun, 'Chosunhugi Bingoncheung Yeosungui Jamaesiltae' [The poor women's self-selling in the

mistress, who treats her in a ‘cold’ and ‘selfish’ manner.⁷⁶ This harsh treatment reaches its peak when Mittome remains behind at the chapel to become a believer in Jesus, rather than following Lady Na immediately when she leaves in the middle of worship. Here Lady Na’s authority over her maid seems to be almost unlimited, such that she has the power even of life and death when she leaves Mittome almost lifeless from a beating. It is particularly notable that Lady Na is able to act in this way without either consulting, or reporting to, her husband or other male masters.

The authority exhibited by Lady Na as a Confucian noble class woman in Choson is in stark contrast to the position of women in Victorian society, who would usually have no rights over the ‘property’ of the household, especially in the first half of the nineteenth century.⁷⁷

If a Victorian wife were to damage household property, she would be obliged to inform her husband, the acknowledged ‘owner’. As noted by William Blackstone with regard to the status of Victorian women, ‘the very being or legal existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage, or at least is incorporated and consolidated into that of the husband.’⁷⁸

Furthermore, it appears that the legal status of married women differed somewhat between western Victorian society and Confucian Choson. While a Victorian wife had no legal identity independent of her husband, a Choson woman of the *yangban* class did so through a male relative, although it means that her male relative was to be interrogated or jailed on behalf of her. That is, while they were not allowed direct involvement in the case, they were nevertheless able to exercise their rights in legal matters as a pertinent party.⁷⁹

With regard to punishment under the law, Confucian women, especially those of the noble class, were exempted from direct interrogation and/or trial, except in the case of high treason.⁸⁰ A noble woman could not be subjected to torture or imprisonment without the

second half of Choson], *Yeosunggwa Yeoksa* [Women and History], Vol.20, (June 2014), 1-30. It is worth noting that the sale of girls by their parents was not confined to Choson. For example, in England, at least until the end of the sixteenth century, marriage was dictated by the parents’ desires and needs for political alliances and/or economic advantage. (See Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage In England 1500-1800*. Abridged ed. New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1979, 128.)

⁷⁶ Ellasue C. Wagner, *Kim Su Bang and Other Stories of Korea* (1909), 58.

⁷⁷ See Sarah Grimke, *Letters on the Equalities of Sexes and the Condition of Woman* (Boston: 1838).

⁷⁸ See William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (Oxford, 1765-1769), Book 1, Chap. 15, 430.

⁷⁹ *Kyungguk Daijeon* 經國大典 [The book of law in Choson, originally completed in 1485], (Kyeongsung: Choson chongdokbu Jungchuwon, 1934), hyungjeon 刑典 (criminal law), sugum 囚禁 (prison and prohibition), 470.

⁸⁰ In Confucian Choson, if the male head of the household was found guilty of a major crime, it was the custom that the whole family was to be punished. From around the end of the 18th century, however, the law prohibited the capital punishment of the wives of criminals. Yangban women and children were also exempt from becoming slaves. *Sok Daijeon*, 續大典 [The book of law in the late Choson, originally completed in 1746], edit. Seoul National University Gyujanggak, (Seoul, 1998), 411.

governor first giving a report to the judicial authority, the king. If a woman were to be convicted, she would often be given the option to pay a fee to avoid direct punishment.⁸¹

Both the Victorian and the Confucian woman were subject to her husband's power, and her actions regulated by him. However, there were subtle differences. According to the Victorian code, the husband had the right to impose moderate chastisement in order to correct his wife's misbehaviour. Yet while this right existed in law, there was no corresponding check upon his power or legal support to which a wife could apply should the husband misuse it. As such, women could be constrained even to the extent of their being denied the 'liberty of going to places of worship by an irreligious husband.'⁸² A similar situation existed in Choson, as revealed in the relationship between Pobai and Mansiki in the novel *Daybreak in Korea*. Seeking to be a regular member of a Confucian temple, Mansiki, the second husband of Pobai, does not permit her to go to the place of Christian worship, and uses violence in order to impose his will, apparently with impunity. However, in fact the law of Choson did pronounce upon the matter of domestic violence, albeit that the offence was classed as 'personal' and considered less serious than other crimes of violence.⁸³ In the case of a severe assault, if the wife did not want to divorce, then the offender could be released through payment of a ransom. In the case that the woman inflicted violence upon the man, however, her punishment under the law was much more severe. Women convicted would be subject to flogging with one hundred lashes, and if the assault had resulted in more than cuts, her punishment was to be increased to three grades above that for perpetrators in non-domestic cases.⁸⁴

With regard to divorce, especially before the 19th century, in America and in Britain the usual reasons were adultery, or bad behaviour by either party, but it remained more difficult for a woman to obtain a divorce than for a man. For example, if a woman intended to file against her husband, she had to prove not only that he was guilty of adultery, but also that

⁸¹ See *Jeongjo Sillok* (The annals of the king of Jeongjo), vol. 31, p.30b, 32. All Sillok citations refer to the *Choson Wangjo Sillok* 朝鮮王朝實錄 [The annals of the Choson Dynasty]. 48 vols. Reprint. (Seoul: Kuksa Pyeonchan wiwonhoi, 1955-1958).

⁸² Sarah Grimke, *Letters on the Equalities of Sexes and the Condition of Woman*, 78.

⁸³ See Jin Heegwon, 'Chosuneseoui Yeosungui Beobjeok Jiwiedaihan Sogo' [The research on Choson Women's position viewed from the law], *BeobChoelhak Yeongu* [The research on Law Philosophy], vol.8 no.2, (Seoul: The society of Korean Law Philosophy, 2005), 304.

⁸⁴ See *Daimyungrooljikhae* 大明律直解 [Translation and interpretation on Ming's criminal law code, originally published in 1395]. translated and annotated by Park Chul Ju, Seoul:Minsokwon, 2014, 499. 刑律 [the rule of punishment], 卷第 20[vo.20], 鬪毆[beating], 妻妾毆夫[wife, concubine, beating their husband].

this was combined with ‘cruelty, incest, bigamy, or bestiality,’⁸⁵ whereas a husband could divorce his wife simply on the grounds of adultery. What is more, filing for divorce was itself very difficult, because the divorce was to be granted only by act of parliament. Just how difficult it was for a Victorian woman to obtain a divorce is exemplified in the case of Mehitable Grisworld, reported by Linda K. Kerber:⁸⁶ Grisworld submitted documentation of her nineteen-year marriage, and of the violence she had suffered at the hands of her husband. Two women testified on behalf of Mehitable, saying that she was at their house ‘one night some years ago without a Cote in her shift and stays and apron and ... with both her hands tied together and her arms bloody’. Nevertheless, Mehitable Griswold failed to get her divorce, and her petition was ultimately withdrawn.⁸⁷

In Confucian Choson, there were seven grounds upon which a man could file for divorce, as spelled out before.

In fact, however, divorce was very uncommon, especially among the *yangban* class. Even if a *yangban* woman had given her husband cause to seek divorce, to drive her out of the family was difficult, because it would mean revealing the husband’s loss of authority and prestige as the head of the house.⁸⁸ Moreover, according to Yi Sik (1584-1647), an officer in Choson, ‘*Yangban* women in Korea cannot be remarried. Among the *yangban*, a husband is not allowed to drive out his wife, because of humanitarian concerns.’⁸⁹ Finally, among this social class divorce was considered as bringing shame and disgrace to the whole family, not just the man and woman directly involved; hence the matter was made more complicated by the views and actions of the relatives of each party.

Among the common classes, the obstacles to divorce were not so great.⁹⁰ If a Choson woman chose to run away from the marital home, the husband could not force her to return. Marriages were based on personal assent and on custom, usually without any official documentation to prove that they had taken place.⁹¹ Similarly, the method of divorce was based on traditional practice, where one party would make a sign, using a patched cloth

⁸⁵ See ‘Divorce’, *Victorian Britain, An Encyclopedia* ed. Sally Mitchell (Oxon: Routledge, 2011), 223. This book was originally published in New York. Garland Publishing, INC., 1988.

⁸⁶ See Linda K. Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1980), 172.

⁸⁷ Griswold’s divorce papers of Mar. 1746 are in the Conn. Sup. Ct. File Papers, Hartford Dist.

⁸⁸ Kang Myeongwan, *Grimeuro Ilkneun Choson Yeosungui Yeoksa* [The history of Choson women read through pictures] (Seoul, 2012), 293.

⁸⁹ See Yi Sik 李植 (1584~1647), *Takdangjib* 澤堂集, “我國士族之女, 不得改適, 士夫疏棄正妻, 名教不容...”策問 (夫婦), in *Hankukmunjipchonggan* [General Publication on Korea’s Anthology], Vol. 88, p.503.

⁹⁰ Homer Hulbert, ‘The Status of Woman in Korea,’ *The Korea Review*, Vol.2, (April 1902), 156.

⁹¹ *Ibid.* 155-156.

drawn from the other party's clothes. As with marriages, it was rare for there to be any official record of divorce among the common class, but one intriguing document does survive. Written by Choi Deukhyun around the 1800s, this paper records that Choi received 35 yang with an agreement of divorce with his wife; his wife was to go, with his children, to the house of a *yangban* family as a concubine.⁹²

Having compared some core elements of women's standing in their married relations within the Confucian realm and that of the Victorian West, we can see that the view of women in the Choson period presented by the women missionary authors, as predominantly victims and not agents, is one-sided. A comparative study of these two societies reveals that while both ran along patriarchal lines, nevertheless women did have some rights. Although these rights differed, Choson women were not dramatically more disadvantaged than Victorian women. On the contrary, despite the restrictions of Confucian patriarchal society, in some ways they enjoyed more autonomy and protection than their Victorian counterparts. Certainly, they stood in a subservient position compared to men, but while the Victorian missionaries branded Choson a society and culture that victimized women and particularly young girls, they ignored the rights and protections enjoyed by females in Confucian Korea. Moreover, they appeared oblivious of the fact that similar criticism could be made of their own culture.

⁹² See *Kyunghyang News Paper* 京郷新聞, 17 April 2013, p.59.

Chapter 3. The Mission Framework: ‘Woman’s Work for Woman’

The encounter between western female missionaries and Choson women occurred as part of the mission project ‘Woman’s Work for Woman’, which aimed to evangelize and enlighten Korean girls and women. This was considered crucial, owing to the influence exerted by women over present and future generations, and their importance in building a Christian home.¹

In February 1885, Horace Grant Underwood, an American Presbyterian Missionary² then in Yokohama, Japan, and waiting to enter Korea, wrote to Dr Ellinwood, Secretary of the Presbyterian Mission Board, that ‘it will be an utter impossibility to get at the women of Korea, except through women.’³ This was because Korean women were subject to the Confucian custom of *naeoebub*, or gender separation. Especially for those of the high class, women’s quarters were confined, and if an outing were necessary, and permitted by the husband, then the woman must take steps to avoid being seen. For the ruling *yangban* class and upper classes, leaving the house involved being carried out in a palanquin, or covering themselves with a *changoat* cape. Usually a woman would not meet a man face to face unless he were a close family member or relative.

For *yangban* women, customs were particularly strict. As the English writer and photographer Isabella Bishop (1831-1904) explained: ‘Absolute seclusion is the inflexible rule among the upper classes. The ladies have their own courtyards and apartments, towards which no windows from the men’s apartments must look.’⁴ For a Choson woman to meet a foreign man would have been unthinkable. Indeed, as the English explorer A. Henry Savage-Landor (1865-1924) notes in his *Corea or Cho-Sen: the Land of the Morning Calm*, during his time in Choson the only women he met were of the lower class. Even then, he mentions that whenever he approached women in the street they would avoid the encounter, hiding themselves, hurriedly disappearing behind the nearest door. Savage-Landor confesses that at first he thought that all the houses in the village must belong to all the

¹ In 1893 the Council of Missions adopted 10 principles of the Protestant missions in Korea as the Mission Policies. The second principle points directly to Korean women as a major target: ‘The conversion of women and the training of Christian girls should be an especial aim, since mothers exercise so important an influence over future generations.’ See C.C. Vinton, ‘Presbyterian Mission Work in Korea’, *The Missionary Review of the World*, Vol.6, No.9 (September, 1893), 671.

² In April 1885 Underwood was, along with American Methodist Henry Gerhard Appenzeller, the first missionary to arrive in Korea with formal recognition by the Choson government.

³ Horace Grant Underwood’s letter to Dr Ellinwood (#21 /t/ Yokohama, Japan, Feb.16th, 1885), In *Horace G. Underwood Papers I*, ed. and trans. by Yi Man Yeol and Oak Sung Deuk (Seoul, 2005), 349-351.

⁴ Isabella Bishop, *Korea and Her Neighbours: A Narrative of Travel, with an Account of the Vicissitudes and Present Position of the Country*, 2 vols. (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1897), i.150.

women, and only later discovered that women in Choson had the right to enter any house in order to avoid an encounter with a foreign man, because foreign men were considered ‘occidental ghosts.’⁵

Consequently, as most women in Choson (old Korea) were inaccessible to western male missionaries, it was necessary to call upon Christian women to reach them. Hence we can see that the new opportunities for women in missionary work were created not for their benefit or fulfilment, but purely for pragmatic reasons. According to the missionaries’ belief that ‘one could not expect a convert to Christianity automatically to become a virtuous, useful, and praiseworthy wife and mother without anyone to instruct her and inculcate within her the principles of Christian womanhood,’⁶ female missionaries and missionary wives⁷ were to provide examples of that ideal Christian womanhood and prepare their converts to build Christian households. They did so through teaching, training, and transplanting the ideals of western Christian femininity and domesticity, for example with regard to raising children, cooking, sewing,⁸ and domestic hygiene.

Given that for both Confucian and Victorian women, their true role was considered to be a domestic one, it was natural that the meetings between western women missionaries and Korean women should have taken place mainly in a domestic setting, at home, away from public view. For example, Mattie Noble, wife of the Reverend Noble, who worked in Pyeng Yang, wrote that:

I have been trying lately to visit all my immediate next door neighbors & I find that outside of our wall around our compound on the three sides there are 15 tiny straw-roofed huts, homes of Korean families, an average of 4 in each family. As yet only 2 of the homes are Christian, though from a few of the others a few children attend our schools. I found that the majority of the people had never even entered into our Church door or in our home. Sadie accompanied me, & we taught them all of Jesus, invited them all to attend Church & to visit me.⁹

Lillias Underwood tells how, on an evangelical trip with her husband around the northern part of Korea, ‘The women flocked in to greet me, and next day I had the larger room

⁵ A Henry Savage-Landor, *Corea or Cho-Sen: the Land of the Morning Calm* (London:William Heinemann, 1895). Trans. Bokryong Sin (Seoul: Jipmoondang, 1999), 65-66.

⁶ Lisa Joy Pruitt, *A Looking Glass for Ladies: American Protestant Women and the Orient in the Nineteenth Century* (Macon, GA, 2005), 52.

⁷ Patricia R. Hill, *The World Their Household: The American Woman’s Foreign Mission Movement and Cultural Transformation, 1870-1920* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1985), states that in the early years of the women’s foreign mission movement, the wives were considered as ‘effective missionaries’ as long as they could provide a role model for the Christian home, including most teaching and nursing (72). Also see ‘An Open Letter’, *Woman’s Work for Woman* 5 (March 1890), 59.

⁸ See Annie Baird’s letter to Gussie (April 12, 1894), in which she says that she is teaching Amah, a Korean woman, to ‘make buttonholes, catstitch and hemstitch.’

⁹ Mattie Wilcox Noble, *The Journals of Mattie Wilcox Noble 1892-1934* (Seoul, 1993), 1901 10.1 (Journal#2), 44.

[probably belonging to the house of one of the women], sixteen by twenty-four feet, crowded with heathen women who came to see the foreign woman and child, but were willing to hear about Christ.¹⁰

The missionaries also opened up their own homes. Groups of women (and men) would visit the westerners' homes, not just to hear the Christian message, but also for 'koo kyung' (sightseeing). Wagner tells how her home was used as a space of interchange, above all for the evangelical opportunities that this afforded.¹¹ She would receive from 10 to 75 local people a day, and sometimes more than 100 people a day or 300 a week. Especially on special holidays such as Buddha's birthday, the number of Korean visitors could be into the hundreds.¹² Owing to the strict Confucian gender code, women of the higher class would make their visits at night.¹³ Wagner writes how the wife and daughter of Kim Hogan used to visit her home regularly at night, for a period of two months. She and Caroline¹⁴ would treat the women to a western type of biscuit they liked. They later became devout Christians, with the daughter becoming a Bible woman.¹⁵

Visiting the missionaries' homes provided the local Korean women with a glimpse into western modern culture and domesticity, and a model for a Christian home.¹⁶ When, in *Daybreak in Korea*, Annie Baird describes the visits of 'mudang' Sim Ssi and groups of Korean women to the missionary's home, where the missionary wife tries to deliver the new doctrine to them,¹⁷ she is certainly drawing upon her own experience. A particular room in Baird's home, with organ, pictures, and books, was always open to Korean women visitors, and it was there that she taught them about the Bible, Christian doctrine, and hymns.

In addition to the Bible study that would take place during these visits, the missionary women would take the opportunity to deliver other training and education to the Korean women, on matters of western scientific domesticity such sanitation and hygiene, and cookery. In *The Man in Grey*, Perry describes how the women missionaries invite groups of

¹⁰ Lillias Underwood, *Fifteen Years Among the Topknots*, 223.

¹¹ Ellasue Wagner, *Korea Calls: Pioneer Days in the Land of Morning Calm* (Bristol, 1948), 31-36.

¹² As reported by Wagner, from Nov. 1906 to May, 1907, there were more than 2,500 Korean visitors. See Wagner, 'The Girls' Boarding School, Song Do', *The Korea Mission Field*, 3-9 (1907.9), 133.

¹³ Wagner, *Korea Calls*, 32-33.

¹⁴ Caroline was Miss Arrena Carroll, who lived with and worked alongside Wagner at Songdo during Wagner's first years in Korea. Wagner referred to her as 'my beloved counsellor and friend', and dedicated *Korea Calls* to her. See Wagner, *Korea Calls*, 11, 16, 23.

¹⁵ *Korea Calls*, 33.

¹⁶ Annie Baird, 'Report of Work among Women at Fusan', 1893, Korea Report, Korea Letters and Correspondence, Records of the PCUSA.

¹⁷ See *Daybreak in Korea*, Chapter V, 'An Absorption of New Ideas,' 57-68.

Korean women and teach them how to bathe their babies, while Underwood writes about teaching the local women how to launder clothes.¹⁸

In the early mission period in Korea, in cases where a Korean woman was to be baptized by a male missionary, a curtain would be hung across the middle of the room, and the woman would remain hidden behind it on one side, while the men would be on the other. The curtain would have a hole cut into it, just large enough for the woman to put her head through, to allow the male missionary to perform the baptism by pouring water over her head.¹⁹ Meanwhile, the women missionaries also observed the gender code, in accordance with traditional Confucian custom, so as not to cause offence or misunderstanding. As Baird notes: 'That women can itinerate in Korea has been abundantly proved, but it should be done with as little publicity as possible, and with due precautions against misunderstandings. For a woman iterator, for instance, to attempt to propagate the gospel by singing and addressing a crowd of promiscuous idlers, is worse than futile.'²⁰ Indeed, during the early mission period in Korea, women missionaries, following the Choson custom, would sometimes even ride on a palanquin. Lillias Underwood did so on her evangelical trip through Korea with her husband, whom she called a 'Captain', thus resonating with the Confucian patriarchal image.²¹ She would meet and teach the local women, while the Reverend Underwood led meetings with the men. Similarly, Wagner's *Pokjumie* features a foreign woman missionary making an evangelical trip and riding in a palanquin.²²

While the strict gender code imposed on not only Confucian women, but also western Victorian females, might at first have appeared a major obstacle to the success of the mission in Korea, in fact both groups of women seem to have managed well, and the missionaries' efforts resulted in many conversions, thus transforming the lives of the Korean women who heard their message.

¹⁸ See Perry's *The Man in Grey*, 22-23. Mrs Bright, the missionary wife, invites a group of Korean women to her missionary home to see her baby take her daily bath, to instruct them on how to bathe a baby properly. See also Underwood's *With Tommy Tompkins in Korea*, 276.

¹⁹ See the account of the baptism of Chun Samtok, the first woman baptized in the northern region in Korea, by the missionary, Mr Scranton, *Victorious Lives of Early Christians in Korea*. The First Book of Biographies and Autobiographies of Early Christians in the Protestant Church in Korea. Compiled and written in the Korean language by Mattie Wilcox Noble; translated into English by the compiler (Christian Literature Society of Korea, 1927), 32.

²⁰ See Annie Baird, *Fifty Helps for the Beginner in the Use of the Korean Language*, Fourth Edition, (Yokohama: Fukuin Printing Co., 1911), 97-98.

²¹ See *With Tommy Tompkins*, 17. It seems that the name 'Captain' refers to Mr Underwood's tendency to be somewhat overbearing, having his own way in 'a straining of the relations between the powers.' Lillias carefully makes a link between this trait and the Confucian patriarchal image.

²² See Wagner, *Pokjumie*, 64-65.

The archives bear witness to some remarkable stories of conversion of Korean women during the early mission in Korea, in works bearing titles such as *Victorious Lives of Early Christians in Korea*.²³ The stories tell how, for a variety of motives, Confucian Korean women such as Mrs Lulu Chu Kim, Mrs Samtok Chun, and Kyung suk Lee, accepted the Christian doctrine and had their lives transformed. In the case of Chun Sam Deuk²⁴ the spur was family disharmony over a concubine; for Mrs Kyeng Sook Yi²⁵ it was poverty, while for Lulu Kim²⁶ it was illness, but all were converted to Jesus' doctrine and became believers, demonstrating great courage and conquering many difficulties and challenges faced in their lives as Korean women in a Confucian society. Often, they faced persecution for their faith, from their families or even neighbours.²⁷ In many cases, however, their belief and perseverance won over their families, and gained more converts to Christianity.²⁸ One story that illustrates this pattern is of a noble Korean woman, Tuksun Kim.²⁹ Born in Kat Pawee, a small village in Sangnu magistracy, Whang Hai Province, Korea in 1870, she became a Christian at the age of 40. When, in 1910, she heard the story of Christ for the first time from her aunt, she travelled 30 miles on foot to Chairiung, to hear more from a minister of the Gospel. Finding herself drawn to the Gospel message, she became a Christian and Bible woman. Her husband persecuted her for her new faith, denouncing it as a new religion of foreigners. However, her perseverance led to the conversion of other family members, including even her husband.

Another Korean woman, Ro Salom, heard the story of Christ from her sister-in-law in 1895, soon after the Chinese-Japanese war. Ro was moved by the story and converted to the new faith, becoming only the third member of her family to do so, after her sister-in-law and a brother-in-law who worked as an assistant at the clinic run by William James Hall,³⁰ (1860~1894) the American Methodist medical missionary. Upon her conversion, Ro volunteered to go around village by village evangelizing women and men. Despite severe persecution from her husband and mother-in-law she kept her faith, was baptized in the

²³ See *Victorious Lives of Early Christians in Korea*.

²⁴ See *ibid.* 25-38.

²⁵ *Ibid.* 13-24.

²⁶ *Ibid.* 55-84.

²⁷ For example, Mrs LuLu Chu Kim, a Bible Woman in the Hai Ju district, suffered persecution from her in-laws, including her mother-in-law. See Mattie Wilcox Noble, *Victorious Lives of Early Christians in Korea*, 65.

²⁸ See M.F. Scranton, 'Among Women of City and Country,' *The Korean Repository*, (eds. F. Ohlinger, H.G. Appenzeller, and G.H. Jones), Vol.4, (August 1897), 294-297.

²⁹ See *Victorious Lives of Early Christians in Korea*, 163-174.

³⁰ William James Hall (1860~1894) stayed in Pyeung Yang, the northern part of Korea, during the war, treating wounded soldiers along with local Korean people in his clinic.

winter of 1895, and received her baptismal name, 'Salome'. Later her whole family was converted, and in 1905 her husband became a pastor in the Methodist Church.³¹

Some Korean women negotiated with the male centred Confucian system, working with their husbands or in-laws, little by little drawing from them their rights of religious freedom. Lulu Chu Kim gradually brought her in-laws to the Christian faith through compromise, worshipping on alternate Sundays at the church, and every other Sunday at home.³² However, there were also cases in which the converted women were never welcomed into their married family, and whose husband and in-laws were never converted. For example, a woman named Dori was divorced by her husband for keeping her Christian faith. So enraged was he at Dori's decision to take their young daughter to a prayer gathering held by the missionary wife of Reverend William Noble, that he sent a person to forcefully tear off a part of her *jugori* (jacket), a sign indicating divorce.³³

In fact, during that time of early mission in Korea, women's conversion to Christianity was often considered as resistance against husband and family, and as a challenge against the whole patriarchal Confucian structure and system.³⁴ Christianity, the 'new' 'foreign' religion in Choson, was considered as a 'curse' for the family and future generations.³⁵ Women's conversion was considered a matter of crisis fallen upon the male head of the Confucian family, and the response was to persecute the woman severely,³⁶ sometimes even to death.

3.1. Women's Conversion: Transformed Choson Korean Women

Despite the limits imposed by the gender norms in both western and Confucian society, the female missionaries' 'Woman's Work for Woman' in Korea appears to have been a success. Indeed, especially in the early years of mission, in the late 19th and early 20th century, there was a remarkable increase in the number of Korean Christian believers.³⁷

³¹ See 'Ro Salom Yeosa yakreok' [Ro Salom's profile], *Seungriui Sangwhal* [The Life of Victory], compiled by Matti Wilcox Noble (Seoul, 1927). See also Yi Deokju, *Hankukgyohoi Cheoeum Yeosungdeul* [Early Korean Church Women], (Seoul, 2007), 97-108.

³² See *Victorious Lives of Early Christians in Korea*, compiled by Mattie Wilcox Noble, (Seoul, 1927), 77-78.

³³ See 'Ro Salom Yeosa yakreok' [Ro Salom's profile], 88.

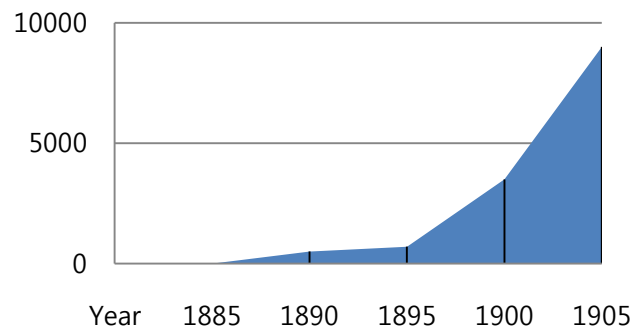
³⁴ Ha Hee Jung, 'The early Chun-Do Buin's religious faith and theology,' *Hankuk KiDokGyo YeokSa YeonGuSo SoSik* [Korea Christianity History Research Source], Vol.34. (1999),13.

³⁵ See, *Daybreak in Korea*, 75.

³⁶ *Ibid.* 76

³⁷ The statistics show remarkable growth in the Korean Church, especially between 1895 and 1905, the time of two wars, the Chinese (Sino)-Japanese war in 1894-5 and the Russo-Japanese war in 1904-5. See: The graph showing number of baptized members of the Presbyterian Church in Korea (1885-1905), Roy E. Shearer, *Wildfire: Church Growth in Korea* (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1966), 543. Re-quoted from Park Chung

FIGURE 3
NUMBER OF BAPTIZED MEMBERS OF THE
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN KOREA (1885-1905)



We can gain a glimpse into the missionaries' work at this time through the writings of the female authors. For example, Annie Baird tells how, in the 1890s, she and her colleague Mrs Graham Lee held a general class for the country women in Pyeng Yang. Over the ten days when that first class was held, twenty-four women joined, two of whom had walked for one hundred and fifty miles to get there; thirteen years later, the mission was running a total of 125 classes for women throughout the station territory.³⁸ Meanwhile, Lillias Underwood, referring to the general report of the Syen Chyun station for 1901-2, tells us that 'there are 199 baptized and 588 catechumen women, and as a conservative estimate 1200 Christian women in north Pyeng An province...as I think of them individually and collectively, every other thought is eclipsed by the deep impressions they have made upon me by their yearning to be taught... We request the mission to consider the urgent need...they [Korean women in the village] have waited long for a woman to teach them.'³⁹

Wagner, too, indicates the remarkable growth in the number of women believers, albeit in fiction rather than reportage. In her story 'Mittome', Martha, mother of the title character,

Shin, *Protestantism and Politics in Korea* (Seattle, 2003), 16. (Graph shown here adapted by the author.) Park Chung Shin, *Protestantism and Politics in Korea*, (Seattle, 2003), 30-32, asserts that the rapid expansion of Protestantism in Korea at this time was partly due to Koreans seeking 'consolation and political rights through the Church', while Korea suffered war determined by stronger countries, such as China, Japan and Russia, and eventually succumbed to foreign control. Park says, at the various Protestant revival meetings in Korea in the early 1900's, the national leaders of the Protestant Christian Church in Korea would plead with the local people with the following message: 'Oh, you who are in sorrow over the lack of freedom and equality! If you are in sorrow over your such plight, then, give trust in the Protestant Christianity. If you muster other Christians over the country to demand your legitimate rights by proper means, then, no evil ones can silence you!' *Daihan Maeil Sinbo* [Korean Daily News Paper], 13 March 1910, 1.

³⁸ See Annie Baird, *Inside Views of Mission Life*, 80-82.

³⁹ Underwood, *Fifteen Years Among the Topknots*, 235.

wishes to become a Bible woman, but worries that there might not be room for her, as there are already ‘many’ Korean women believers and applicants to become Bible women.⁴⁰ Meanwhile, Jean Perry, in her narrative *Uncle Mac the Missionary*, describes packed congregations for worship, and tells of the meetings at the home of the missionary Mr Bright, in a room that had been ‘enlarged several times, and yet the doors and windows threatened to burst open with the crowd that pressed in every evening.’⁴¹

As the church in Korea grew, so too did the standing and emancipation of Korean women. Indeed, the lives of many women were transformed. For example, Perry describes a Korean lady believer she encountered during the special campaign of 1910, who seems free of the restraints imposed upon traditional Confucian womanhood, and is not afraid to contradict the strict gender code, by choosing to walk many miles in ‘public’ while using her sedan chair to transport Christian tracts and Scriptures. As she tells a concerned lady missionary, ‘I shall walk. I am anxious to obtain these Scriptures to distribute to those who know not the doctrine, and I can go home walking by the side of my chair.’⁴²

Mattie Noble, wife of the Reverend Noble, who worked in PyeongYang and Seoul from 1892 to 1934, received invaluable help from Korean women in her mission activities and evangelical visits, especially when working in remote or rural areas. For example, the contribution of Ro (Salome) in KangSyo is recognized in the official report made by the Reverend Noble in the *Official Minutes of the Korea Mission of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, 1900:⁴³

Wyoming chapel is located about twenty-five miles south of this city [Pyengyang] at KangSyo. The building is the gift of the W.F.M.S., Wyoming, Penn., and is named in honor of the givers. The money for the purchase was sent to Mrs Noble. After much consideration the chapel was bought and Salome, a school teacher and Bible woman, was put in charge of it. The chapel was intended mainly for the women, but the men would not stay away. The attendance has risen from fifteen at the beginning of the year to sixty-one, of whom about one-half are men. Salome is the teacher and the class leader... We congratulate the women of the Wyoming church for the fruit of their loving gift to the people of KangSyo.

Here, it appears that the Korean woman, Salome, has been instrumental in the growth and success of the church. It is particularly noticeable that among the congregation are very many Korean men, who have accepted the leadership of a Korean woman. For a woman to

⁴⁰ See Wagner, *Kim Su Bang*, 75-76.

⁴¹ See Perry, *Uncle Mac the Missionary*, 31.

⁴² Perry, *Twenty Years a Korea Missionary*, 49.

⁴³ *Official Minutes of the Korea Mission of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1900. Official Minutes of the Sixteenth Annual Meeting* (Methodist Publishing House, Seoul. 1900), 42.

lead and teach men would have been unthinkable, not only under the Confucian gender code, but also under the Victorian ideal of womanhood, according to which a woman's place was within a separate domestic sphere.

Another Korean woman known to have exercised remarkable leadership was Sadie Kim,⁴⁴ who worked with Mrs Mattie Noble in Pyeng Yang.⁴⁵ Serving as a Bible woman, Sadie defied the limitations of her *yangban* status, and would visit door-to-door to teach and preach,⁴⁶ as well as leading women's prayer meetings. As a part of her evangelizing activities, Sadie would take on the work of cleaning and shrouding the bodies of deceased parishioners, a role traditionally reserved for male funeral directors.⁴⁷ She also organized a Ladies Aid Society (1903) and Widows Relief Association (1916), without any dependence on men.

While Sadie Kim went through training and education, there were other women who, even though they remained uneducated, nevertheless exercised remarkable leadership. Lillias Underwood tells how one elderly and illiterate Korean woman helped in the founding of a church in 'a village nestled right up in the mountains. Here the interest had extended to two villages of hardy mountaineers, all of which had been started by an old woman from Sorai. She cannot read, but she continually preaches Christ to every one whom she meets. Her son is the local leader, and his family are all Christians.'⁴⁸ Thus we learn how a woman's belief and passion for faith have overcome the limitations of illiteracy and gender codes in order to establish a base for the local church.

While the growth in church numbers at this time is certainly remarkable, even more so are the changes that conversion wrought upon women's lives. Women in Korea began to break free of the restraints that had been imposed upon them by the gender codes of Confucian and western Victorian society, and to venture out into a sphere beyond domesticity. These changes, although real, are touched upon in only very few documents. Therefore, the novels

⁴⁴ Sadie was born in 1865 at Yungyun, North Pyeng Yang Province. In 1893, she heard about the new faith from Mr Suk Kyeng Oh, a cousin of her husband, and she was baptized in 1896. She attended the weekly Women's Prayer meetings held by Mrs Noble, and after attending the first Women's Bible Institute, she became a Bible woman in 1899. See Mattie Wilcox Noble, *Victorious Lives of Early Christians in Korea*, 127-143.

⁴⁵ 'We [with Sadie, the Korean Bible Woman] visited six homes today at the Waysung, the homes of Yangbans who follow the custom of keeping women secluded quite rigidly. We urged the wives of the Christian men to come to Church.' Mattie Wilcox Noble, *The Journals of Mattie Wilcox Noble 1892-1934* (Seoul, 1993), 1902.4.17 (Journal #2), 51.

⁴⁶ See *Victorious Lives of Early Christians in Korea*, Mattie Wilcox Noble (ed.), 138.

⁴⁷ See Yi Deokju, *Hankukgyohoi Cheoeum Yeosungdeul* [Early Korean Church Women], (Seoul, 2007), 42.

⁴⁸ Underwood, *Fifteen Years Among the Topknots*, 228.

and narratives of Baird, Wagner, Perry and Underwood are all the more valuable, as texts indicating the circumstances and consequences of Choson women's conversion.

3.2. Korean Women and their Conversion in the Female Missionary Narratives

The work of western women missionaries in Korea seems to have brought about significant changes. Not only did they bring many Korean women to Christianity, but it seems that their efforts in mission also contributed to the emancipation and enhanced status of women in Korea. The representations of Korean women characters and the changes they experience upon conversion in the novels and narratives of Baird, Wagner, Perry and Underwood show how diverse these experiences were, and how dramatic the transformations. Many of the changes described in the narratives are by no means contrary to the domestic ideal of womanhood, which the western female missionaries actually supported and reinforced by teaching the Korean women in the arts of domestic management after the western model. Pobai, Pokjumie, and young Mrs Min are typical examples. Although, after conversion they may have deviated somewhat from the traditional Confucian gender code, for example by not wearing the *changoat* or otherwise covering themselves, and by presenting themselves as newly converted women in the new faith, nevertheless they remain true to an ideal of domestic womanhood.

Occasionally, however, the missionary novels and narratives portray women - usually, but not always women who have been converted to Christianity - who exhibit remarkable leadership and independence. These characters present a clearly emancipated picture of womanhood, beyond the Confucian and Victorian domestic ideals, which the authors might not have intended. Exactly why the missionary writers portrayed them in this way, rather than making them conform more closely to the domestic ideal, is not clear. Whatever the reasons might have been, characters such as 'mudang' Sim Ssi in Baird's *Daybreak in Korea*; the old Korean woman in Perry's *The Man in Grey*; Martha in Wagner's story 'Mittome' in *Kim Su Bang* and the dancing girl in her *Pokjumie*, and the young bride whose conversion is described in Underwood's *Fifteen Years Among the Topknots* all show strong leadership and autonomy. Many of them work as Bible women, visiting door to door on evangelical trips wherever they are called, while others exhibit their strength in their speech or actions, thus stepping well outside the traditional women's sphere of domesticity.

In addition to the missionary narratives, other contemporary documents⁴⁹ also reveal the dramatic changes undergone by Korean women upon conversion in the early 1900s. These women succeeded in breaking through what had been rigid gender boundaries, to fulfil themselves as independent agents, exercising autonomy and leadership.

3.2.1 Annie Baird and her Choson Korean Confucian women characters

Annie Baird's *Daybreak in Korea* (1909) is, according to the author, 'little more than a compilation and rearrangement of facts and incidents'⁵⁰ that occurred during her time in the mission field. The Korean women and girls of whom she writes, such as Pobai, Kesiki and Sim Ssi, are, she suggests, accurate representations of the real women she met or observed in Pusan (1891-1895), Daigu (1896-1897), or other places where she lived and worked in Korea, such as in Pyungyang. The circumstances of these women's conversions, and the consequences for them and for others, are as different as are the women themselves.

Pobai

Annie Baird introduces Pobai as a girl of nearly twelve years old, living in a poor country village in the late Choson. She is described as having 'round cheeks that glowed red under the olive skin, and a heavy braid of glossy black hair hanging down her back'. The family is living in poverty, and consequently Pobai's father, as head of the Confucian household, arranges for the child to be married. Pobai does not want to be a bride, but has no choice but to accept her fate, which is sanctioned by Confucian custom. Indeed, the story is to a large extent Baird's critique on the Choson Confucian custom of child marriage.

⁴⁹ With regard to the conversion of women, and the consequent dramatic changes, The Christian News [그리스도신문] reported:

'Lee Merae (리메레) in the region of Incheon used to be illiterate, and she was confined to the boundaries of her home, but after her conversion, she learnt to read and write and began to study the Bible. She went every day to visit other women's houses, encouraging them with the word of the Bible, and whoever she met, she was eager to talk with them, and to do evangelizing work.' Gyohoe Tongshin [Church Communication], 20 June 1905: 6.

Such changes under the influence of the missionaries' work were seen even in the palace in Choson. In response to W.M. Baird's denunciation of polygamy (see W.M. Baird, *Should Polygamists be admitted to the Christian Church*, [Seoul: Trilingual Press, 1896]), in March 1899 members of the women's fellow club (女友會) demonstrated in front of the 'duksu' palace, expressing their opposition to concubinage and appealing to the king to issue a royal edict forbidding the practice. (See 'Chuge choi Eunhee baksaga jeungeonhaneun hanguk gaewha yeoljun' [The matter of Korean Women Enlightenment witnessed by Dr Choi Eunhee] *Yeosung Jungang* [Women Central] vol.3. (1982, 5), 175-176.

⁵⁰ *Daybreak in Korea*, 5.

Here, Baird deliberately chooses as her main character a ‘poor’, ‘common’ girl, rather than a ‘mature’, ‘noble’ woman, thus emphasizing the helplessness of her situation. Young girls were considered particularly marginalized and vulnerable in the patriarchal Confucian society, disadvantaged both by gender and by young age, subject to the control of elderly parents or parents-in-law, or of their husband or other male authority figures. In contrast, even though the Confucian system was patriarchal, mature women were often able to exercise some degree of power. For example, mothers and grandmothers, or (grand) mothers-in-law, would direct all domestic matters by managing and supervising the household and, if they were of the noble class, all of the house servants would also be under their control. Hence, Pobai, a young girl born into poverty, appears to have been an ideal character through which the western woman missionary author could represent and magnify the viciousness of the ‘heathen’ patriarchal family system prescribed in Confucian gender ideology.

In *Daybreak in Korea*, the protagonist Pobai, forced into a marriage she does not desire, learns very early on about that ‘hopeless resignation to the inevitable, which her mother and countless generations of grandmothers before her had learned and practiced with varying degrees of success’⁵¹ Pobai’s hopeless destiny is implied in her grandfather’s refrain of ‘Got to be, got to be, Whether it’s you or whether it’s me.’⁵² In accepting the marriage Pobai gains value through her subservience and self-renouncement; yet, ‘Her spirits were heavy, and she went dragging feet.’⁵³

Baird describes the wedding ceremony of the child Pobai where, dressed in heavy attire, she was not to speak a word; and then something of her life in the bridegroom’s house, where she must obey the orders of her mother-in-law, and work as little more than a servant. This was the lot of many young woman, and the life was particularly tough if the bridegroom’s household was poor, or the mother-in-law strict.

That Pobai’s life in her husband’s household is to be miserable becomes clear very early on. On the evening of her wedding day she is told by her mother-in-law that, ‘There’s a lot of work to do tomorrow, and you’ll have to get up early.’⁵⁴ Sure enough, Pobai’s days are filled with hard domestic labour, including washing the laundry even in the coldest winter, when

⁵¹ *Ibid.* 21.

⁵² *Ibid.* 18.

⁵³ *Ibid.* 15.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* 24.

she had to break the ice with her pounding-stick and dip the garments in and out of the freezing current, she often suffered bitterly, and more than once, when the ice banks began to take on lovely hues of rose and violet, and the piled up hummocks of snow seemed to turn into downy couches, warm and alluring, she had gathered herself together with an effort and hastened home to keep from freezing to death....All day long and from year's end to year's end, she wrought, through the bright years of her girlhood, and got in return something to wear, a scanty two meals of food a day, and a place to sleep at night.⁵⁵

Thus Baird represents Pobai's married life as one of misery, devoid of hope; she is treated as a domestic 'slave,'⁵⁶ every day from the early morning to the dark of night.

Following the sudden death of her first husband, Pobai is sold by her parents-in-law to her second husband, Pang Mansiki, who is portrayed as a violent despot. As Pobai struggles to find a meaning in her life, seeking comfort in her misery, she turns for help to a '*mudang*' (sorceress), Sim ssi, but in vain. Here Baird is representing the traditional religions in Confucian Choson society as 'impotent'. For the author, the native religions are not only 'evil', but also a major obstacle to women's liberation. Making a sharp distinction between Christianity and other faiths, Baird condemns the non-Christian religions,⁵⁷ while designating and deifying Christian belief as the one good and truly ideal faith, which emancipates women from vicious power.⁵⁸ In describing the wretched lives endured by native women such as Pobai, Baird implicitly presents the Christian religion as the redemptive force, while critiquing the traditional Confucian customs and religions. Only the Christian God is capable of rescuing the miserable native women:

Why Pobai did not put an end to her wretched life in the days and weeks and months and years that followed, I do not know, except it was because the good God had something better in store for her. Often, as she sat at the riverside with her heap of washing, and watched the dark current flowing swiftly by, the thought of how sweet it would be to sink beneath those waves and never come back to a world so bereft of hope, welled up in her mind and almost overpowered her.⁵⁹

Pobai's conversion to the new faith takes place when she joins a group of women in the village in the season of thread-making, 'drawing out the cotton and rubbing it into long strands.'⁶⁰ There she meets *mudang* Sim Ssi, who speaks about her visit to the missionaries, and explains that the missionary's wife 'was his only wife, but he treated her as if she were a princess'. When asked by one of the women what the missionaries are doing in Choson, Sim Ssi replies, 'They are here to teach a new doctrine ... I guess it's only meant for people

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* 26.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* 25.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* 54.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* Chapter VI, 'The Power of Meekness,' in which Pobai's power of meekness in Christian belief eventually triumphs over Mansiki's violence. 69ff.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* 40.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* 69.

who are in trouble, anyway. The boy [the Korean hired cook at the missionary house] said they seemed to get lots of ‘comfort’ out of it.’⁶¹

This idea of comfort appeals to the poor, mistreated, Pobai, and that night she walks to the little church, where she undergoes conversion to the new faith and joins in the worship presided over by the foreign male missionary. From the pulpit he proclaims the word of God, saying ‘Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.’⁶²

Following her conversion to Christianity, Pobai goes through significant changes. Her husband Mansiki reacts with violence, beating Pobai⁶³ because he considers her adoption of the new faith as a curse on the whole family and future generations. Pobai endures this violence, but not passively. Inspired by her Christian belief, she is able to utter bravely the words ‘You may beat me to death if you will, or saw me asunder, but I cannot give up my Lord.’⁶⁴ Her steadfastness astonishes Mansiki, and he eventually asks for her forgiveness, saying, ‘If you want to go, I’ll divide what there is left of the property with you, and set you up anywhere you like in a comfortable home; or if you’re willing to stay... I’ll promise you this, that I’ll never lay hand on you again except in love.’⁶⁵

While Mansiki’s suggestion is surprising, all the more notable is Pobai’s response. She does not seek to change her relations with Mansiki, who until now has treated her as no more than a servant. Instead she ‘turned, kneeling as she was, and started to creep toward him on her knees’; now ‘these two people began together to build the fair edifice of a happy home, that rich ornament which seldom precedes a Christian civilization.’⁶⁶ Pobai’s domesticity, her sacrifice, devotion, and forgiveness, are revealed in her submissive response to Mansiki. For Baird, who maintained the domestic ideal of womanhood, this vision of a happy Christian home was the most desirable conclusion to Pobai’s story.

⁶¹ *Ibid.* 71.

⁶² *Ibid.* 73.

⁶³ This story of a husband beating his wife upon her conversion to the new faith appears to be based on real-life cases. For example, Aikyeng, the girls’ schoolteacher at Yengbyen, converted to Christianity some time before her husband, and as a result of her conversion he badly mistreated her. ‘One day because she wished to go to Church, he beat her, then bound her hands and feet, and left the room, and her little girl said, “Mother, I will cut the bonds and let you free,” but Aikyung said, “No, your father bound me and if you loosen the strings, he will be cruel to you. If I die, I die, but by his hands, and I only suffer. If I am released, he must release me.”’ Her husband hearing of this was much touched and went in and set her free, and became a Christian, too.’ (See *The Journals of Mattie Noble 1892-1934*, dated 1911.4.24. Published in Seoul by Hankuk Kidokgyo Yeoksa Yeonguso, 1993.)

⁶⁴ *Daybreak in Korea*, 76.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* 84.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* 85.

Yet while Pobai keeps her subordinate role in relation to her husband, Baird shows her as being very active after her conversion, taking the initiative in the process of her own family's evangelization. Baird tells how:

Her thoughts turned longingly to her childhood's home, to her father and brothers and to Grandfather Kim, who was still alive, though feeble and old. She talked the matter over with Mansiki, and one day they put together a little bundle of tracts, portions of Scripture and a few hymnbooks and set off for the distant hamlet where Pobai had been born, and which she had not revisited since the day she had left it, a little girl-bride years before. They were back in about a week, having disposed of most of the literature and having received from Pobai's relatives the assurance that they would 'think it over.'

They also brought with them old Grandfather Kim and from that time forth the old man made his home with them, and his tottering steps were turned heavenward. He had grown quite deaf and did not understand all of the truth, or even very much of it; but one thing he knew, and that was that Jesus had died for him, and whatever the rest of it was, he felt sure that it was good. When he first came he sat in the sun, and droned over and over as he had done for so long his

'Ooltook, dooltook, chu nam san poge!

Na do choogimyun chu moyang toigennei.'

[Humps and hollows, just look at that hillside!

I'll be like that too, when once I have died.]

But Pobai soon substituted a different refrain, and whenever he began 'Ooltook, dooltook' her hand was on his shoulder and her voice in his ear. 'Oh, no, grandfather, not "ooltook, dooltook," but "dara, dara," This way, you know: "Dara, dara, Yeisoo dara kanei!"'

[Follow, follow, I will follow Jesus]⁶⁷

From being a powerless little girl unable to resist her fate as a child bride, Pobai is transformed into an active woman. She leads the conversion of her own family, and takes her grandfather, an elder patriarch of the Korean Confucian society, into her home, teaching him the new faith and the new refrain, '*Dara, dara, Yeisoo dara kanei!*' [Follow, follow, I will follow Jesus]. Pobai also takes a leading role in a gathering of women believers, held in her own home. Thus, although most of Pobai's activities are seen as taking place within the realm of a domestic household, so not violating the traditional gender code, the changes she undergoes after her conversion, and the leadership she exhibits, are still significant.

Kesiki

Kesiki, wife of Ko Pansoo, the blind geomancer and co-worker (and later, rival) of *mudang* Sim Ssi, is another character who appears to represent the ideal of domestic womanhood. A 'sodden, heavy-faced' woman, Kesiki is the mother of three daughters, whose names reflect the clear Confucian preference for sons. The births of 'First-born', 'Secondly', and, especially, the third daughter 'Sorrowfully', are met by their father without enthusiasm and

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* 88-89.

finally with despair. Ko urges his wife to do '*paik il sung kong*' [100 days of overcoming] prayers at the Buddhist temple on the mountain, so that she may have a son. Here it is interesting that in Ko's understanding, the responsibility for bearing only daughters lies entirely with wife, and he warns her that, 'I could stand it once, I could stand it twice, and I've had to stand it three times, but you know yourself that it mustn't happen again. If it does, out you go.'⁶⁸

Baird emphasizes this preference for male children throughout the story. Pobai's parents-in-law also express their desperate longing to see Pobai deliver a son to their household, for 'If they should die without the assurance of continued male posterity, their shades would have no rest, and the family would be under a curse.'⁶⁹ When Pobai gives birth to a girl, Pobai's mother-in-law expresses her disappointment in blunt terms, saying 'It was all for nothing.'⁷⁰

Despite the unfairness of Ko's order, Kesiki does not show any objection, but meekly obeys her husband. For one hundred days, she gets up in the early morning and washes herself at a hillside spring, then climbs to the Buddhist temple at the top of the mountain, where she prepares and offers food with fine white rice to Buddha and Sam Sin Chei Wang with the prayer, 'O grant me a son!'⁷¹

Some time later, when Ko Pansoo's circumstances have changed and, plunged in debt and thoroughly desperate he attempts to commit suicide, he hears Kesiki at the house, bowing low and uttering the prayer, 'Hanimimiyu, Hananimiyu [Oh, Heavenly One, Heavenly One], help me to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ!' in heartbroken tones.⁷² When and where Kesiki had heard and come to believe in the new faith are not described in detail, but that this has happened is clear from her prayers to Jesus Christ. In turn, these move Ko's own heart and he too comes to the new faith, declaring 'Oh, Kesiki', 'that is what I want, too.'⁷³ Ko is converted, and joins in the gatherings of the faithful held at the home of Pobai and Mansiki. Upon his conversion to the new faith, Ko rejects the traditional Confucian custom of male preference, telling Kesiki, 'boy or girl, we'll call the next one Pangabi [being Glad].'⁷⁴

As for Kesiki, while the details of her conversion remain unclear, it seems that her embracing of the new faith do not change her behaviour as a traditional domestic woman.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* 49.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* 28.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.* 29.

⁷¹ *Ibid.* 52.

⁷² *Ibid.* 91.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.* 92.

Rather, it is the respected afforded to her as a woman in that role, and as a human being, that is the real change.

Sim ssi

In Annie Baird's novel *Daybreak in Korea* (1909), Sim Ssi is the *mudang* (sorceress) of the village, a woman who occupies a position of spiritual might in the community.⁷⁵ The character of Sim Ssi seems to be based on a 'real' person, a *mudang* Sim Ssi who was converted to Christianity in 1906.⁷⁶

Baird's Sim Ssi is a major character in the novel, and an example of a strong female figure in Choson. She stands in contrast to the typical domestic woman, and wields power over public affairs. However, Baird portrays her negatively, as symbolizing the non-Christian religions in old Korea. Denouncing her not only on the grounds of her religion and 'superstition', but also for her lack of domestic virtues, Baird portrays Sim Ssi as an interest-seeking deceiver, emphasizing her commercial incentives and viciousness, and as without real 'shamanic' power.

Nevertheless, Sim Ssi joins in the worship with the believers of the village, and is converted to Christianity. Ko, her one-time assistant, is shown as taking an active role in the process of her conversion. Subsequently, Sim Ssi becomes a servant of Christ, and loses the authority she has exercised as *mudang*.

Here it seems that Baird is pursuing a goal of domesticating the non-domestic women she has encountered in mission, yet it appears that this has resulted in replacing Sim Ssi's leadership (representing female leadership in Choson) with the male leadership in patriarchal Christianity. At this intersection between Confucian and Victorian Christian gender ideology, where patriarchy is the norm for both, Baird encourages women in Choson to live in domesticity, a role that overlaps with the ideal of Victorian womanhood shown in the narratives' representations of missionary wives, domestic women under the control of the patriarchal Protestant Church.

After the conversion of *mudang* Sim Ssi, given Baird's intention to domesticate her, the character is not rewarded with any leadership role in the new faith community. However, it remains unclear how Sim Ssi has been changed upon her conversion. While her authority as *mudang* may have been lost, her spiritual power over the people in the village seems not to

⁷⁵ *Ibid.* 37.

⁷⁶ See Oak Sung-Deuk, 'Healing and Exorcism: Christian Encounters with Shamanism in Early Modern Korea,' *Asian Ethnology*, Vol. 69, No. 1 (2010), 95-128.

have been entirely annulled as Baird might have intended it to be. Sim Ssi's strength, courage, and success against the demon that possesses Toulchai Umme⁷⁷ demonstrate that, even after her conversion, Sim Ssi maintains a role that goes beyond domestic womanhood, and a character marked by independence and spiritual power.

3.2.2. Ellasue Wagner and her Choson Korean Confucian women characters

Wagner's Choson Korean women characters may at first seem diverse, but most are girls or young women, perhaps based on the real Korean women Wagner encountered in her mission school or in the women's group in Songdo. Although these girls and women undergo a sort of transformation upon conversion, such that they no longer conform to the ideal of traditional Confucian womanhood, many remain firmly within the domestic realm, rather than developing strong autonomy and independence. Some, however, such as Martha the mother of Mittome, or Mary the second wife of Kim Su Bang, do appear to change into strong women, exercising leadership in their own context.

Pokjumie

The title character in Ellasue Wagner's *Pokjumie* is a Choson Korean girl from a poor family, married off as a child by her father to a wealthy 'noble' man, Chang Tab Young, as a 'small wife', or concubine.⁷⁸

The status of concubine was not an honourable one in Confucian Choson, neither for the girl nor for her birth family. Most concubines were from the poorer, lower classes, such as the *chun min* (the humble class) or the common classes, and certainly from a class lower than that of the man. There was a prohibition against *yangban* (upper) class women becoming concubines, unless forced to do so by severe economic difficulties.⁷⁹ The prohibition against royal sons-in-law and courtiers from taking *yangban* daughters as secondary wives is clearly described in *Sungjong sillok* 141:1.⁸⁰ Furthermore, it was considered inappropriate for government officers to take the daughter of a 'small wife' in

⁷⁷ *Daybreak in Korea*, 103-105.

⁷⁸ See *Pokjumie*, 13.

⁷⁹ See Martina Deuchler, *The Confucian Transformation of Korea: A Study of Society and Ideology*, Harvard-Yenching Institute Monograph Series (Cambridge, M.A., and London, 1992), 268, 272.

⁸⁰ See *Sungjong Sillok* [The annals of the King Sungjong]. All *Sillok* citations refer to the *Choson Wangjo Sillok* 朝鮮王朝實錄 [The annals of the Choson Dynasty]. 48 vols. Reprint. (Seoul: Kuksa Pyeonchan wiwonhoi, 1955-1958), vol.141, p 1.

lowborn status as a wife.⁸¹ Concubines lacked security and protection, and had no rights even as mothers; in legal terms, the first wife was the mother of their children. The male children of concubines were barred from taking the government exams that were essential to advancement in Confucian society.⁸² We can therefore assume that Pokjumie is certainly not a *yangban*, but is presumably from a common class.

In *Pokjumie*, Wagner is clearly criticizing the practice of concubinage and polygamy as harmful to Choson Confucian women. We see how Pokjumie is victimized, as she and the newcomer Kiseang, a dancing girl and Chang's most recent concubine, compete for the love of Mr Chang. Pokjumie is falsely accused by Kiseang, and is evicted from the household. Not knowing where to go, Pokjumie bewails her hopeless situation, crying,

Woe, woe is me! Surely of all women I am most miserable! Can it be possible that I was a few weeks ago so happy and light-hearted? Yes; I never dreamed of this. Fool! Fool that I was! Why should I have felt my position more secure than that of hundreds of others of Korea's small wives? Yet because he bought me from my father when a little child I dreamed that my husband would treat me differently. Perhaps it was because I reigned supreme in his heart so long that I mistook my place and proudly imagined it would always be thus.⁸³

Here we see that Pokjumie's position was entirely dependent on Chang's favour. Through no fault of her own, she loses that favour and is evicted from the only home she has.

Not knowing where to turn, Pokjumie attempts to throw herself into the river, but is prevented from committing suicide by the coolie Cho, who believes that he can make money from her plight; he rescues Pokjumie in order to sell her to the wealthy Na Sung Mung.⁸⁴ However, before he is able to carry out this plan, Pokjumie encounters a foreign women missionary on an evangelical trip, and despite the brevity of this encounter, she gains faith in Jesus. Later, she remembers Jesus' words, which she has heard from the missionary woman, and finds strength to help her through a difficult situation with Na by reciting, 'Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.'⁸⁵ Pokjumie's new faith enables her to reject Na, but she is punished for this by being thrown into an enclosed room, 'the chamber of corpses'. Close to death, she is rescued by a foreign doctor,⁸⁶ and is then nursed back to health in a Christian house of healing. There she is reunited with the

⁸¹ See *Sejong Sillok* [The annals of the King Sejong], vol. 92, p. 12b.

⁸² See Martina Deuchler, *Confucian Transformation of Korea*, 268, 272. Lillias Underwood also recognizes the inequality, whereby the concubine's 'children were not fully legitimate, and their inheritance of their father's property might be questioned' (*With Tommy Tompkins*, 294).

⁸³ *Pokjumie*, 12-13.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.* 39-41.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.* 80.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.* 97-102.

converted Chang, who is being treated for his opium addiction. Pokjumie forgives Chang, and they go on to create a Christian home together.

Chang acknowledges the wrong he has done to Pokjumie, explaining that, 'I was very sorry for my haste and cruelty, and searched the whole countryside for many weeks. Then I gave it up as hopeless. I implore her forgiveness.'⁸⁷ However, the newly converted Pokjumie prays for Chang, and forgives him without reservation. This act of forgiveness may to some extent be a representation of ideal Christian morality, but the fact that Pokjumie does not once refer to the wrong she has suffered at Chang's hands, but instead enters into reunion with him in sheer joy, seems to indicate that whatever changes she has undergone as part of her conversion, she remains a 'traditional' woman, content to remain in the realm of domesticity and to submit to the will of her husband. Certainly, this interpretation is consistent with Wagner's promotion of domestic womanhood.

Kisaeng, the Dancing Girl

Kisaeng, a dancing girl and second concubine to the wealthy *yangban* Chang, is portrayed as a strong, non-domestic, Korean woman. Wagner paints a negative picture of this female character, who is a skilful 'diplomat' and 'born politician.'⁸⁸ She is shown as plotting against Pokjumie, blaming her rival for injuries that are actually self-inflicted, and successfully bringing about Pokjumie's eviction from the household.⁸⁹

However, Kisaeng's attempt to take over the position of the late lady Chang, and thus gain authority over all the household servants, is thwarted by Chang's daughter, Agie, who reveals the truth about Kisaeng's treachery against Pokjumie. Now it is Kisaeng herself who experiences Chang's wrath, as he tells her: 'You mistress of my house? Indeed! To bring you here as a pretty plaything was quite a different matter. Listen. I shall instruct the servants at once that no one is to take an order from you. My daughter I shall acknowledge as the head of this house. You are - *nothing*!'⁹⁰ Humiliated, that night the dancing girl steals away from the house. Here it seems that Wagner might have been suggesting that, had it not been for the intervention of Agie, Kisaeng could have fulfilled her ambition to become mistress of Chang's household. In reality, however, this would have been almost

⁸⁷ *Ibid.* 111.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.* 56-57.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.* 13-15.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.* 58.

unheard of. Dancing girls were from the lower classes, and it would have been extremely difficult to overcome this given the strictly observed social class system in Choson.⁹¹

In *Pokjumie*, Wagner is stressing at least two issues of social concern. First of all, she denounces polygamy and concubinage, and Kisaeng is a key element of this part of the story. However, while Pokjumie too is a concubine, she is portrayed as innocent, and a victim. Kiseang, on the other hand, is characterized as wicked, and thus represents the other issue close to Wagner's heart, that of moral evil.

Dancing girls, also called *Kisaeng* or *Ginyeo* (妓女), were of low social class and status. They would be trained from childhood in 'women's music' (女樂) in order that they might perform before the women of the royal family.⁹² They were considered as belonging to the government office to serve whenever and wherever the State needed them, and would often be sent to 'serve' and 'comfort' the soldiers residing in the frontier region. As reported in *Sejongsilok*, 'Yejo (the ministry of rites) asked of the King, that Pyeongando youngbyeonbu is a big fortress of one region, so please place 60 Ginyeo there, and the King heard and did what was asked.'⁹³ Ginyeo also served the envoys sent by the King to foreign countries.

While other women lived in seclusion, avoiding communication with men other than in their immediate family and having very little social life, dancing girls were free of all such restraints. They paid a price for such freedom, suffering often dishonour, biased view, and destitution. To the western missionaries in late 19th century Choson, these woman were often seen as unfeminine and wild, or as 'entertaining toys' like the concubines of men of rank and wealth.⁹⁴

However, the most notable characteristic of *Kisaeng*, or dancing girls, was not moral depravity; rather, it was poverty. Lillias Underwood seems to have understood this and acknowledges that the dancing girls in Choson were not like prostitutes in the West. She

⁹¹ See Park Young Min, 'Uncho (운초), the subaltern subject at the edge of the position of government slaves and Kiseang Concubine' *Hankuk Gojeon Yeosung Munhak Yeongu* [Korea Classic Women Literature Research], Vol.11 (Dec. 2005), 237-277. A typical story revealing the low status of dancing girls in Choson is that of 'Uncho', who belonged to the government, but 'fortunately' became a concubine to the powerful *yangban*, Kim Yiyang. However, she was eventually alienated, and unable to be adopted into his household due to her humble class and social position.

⁹² See *Taijosillok* [The annals of the king of Taijo], vol. 8, p. 9. The year of 4, the month of 10, the day of 5jo. Refer to the *Choson Wangjo Sillok* 朝鮮王朝實錄 [The annals of the Choson Dynasty]. 48 vols. Reprint. (Seoul: Kuksa Pyeonchan wiwonhoi, 1955-1958).

⁹³ '禮曹啓平安道寧邊府乃一方巨鎮女妓六十人從之' (see *SejongSillok*, The annals of the king of Sejong), vol. 85, p.1. The year of 21, the month of 4, the day of 5jo.

⁹⁴ See Allen, *Things Korean: A Collection of Sketches and Anecdotes Missionary and Diplomatic*, (New York, London: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1908), 126.; Horace G. Underwood, *The Call of Korea, Political-Social-Religious*, (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1908), 63; Ellasue Wagner, *Korea: The Old and the New*, (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1931), 88-89.

describes a performance by dancing girls at the palace in the Fall of 1889, reporting that '[for dancing girls] to appear in public,' was itself 'the gravest breach of propriety in the eyes of all Koreans.'⁹⁵ Underwood views the dancing girls as 'the most pitiable and helpless of women,'⁹⁶ as most had been sold into the profession as children, due to poverty. Based on historical documents, we find that some girls did become *Ginyeo* voluntarily, believing that to do so would be a way out of poverty. *Taijongsillok*⁹⁷ contains a story called *Maewha*, in which the title character takes this course of action. Others were forced into the profession by circumstance, such as the loss of parents in childhood.⁹⁸ Sometimes, due to extreme poverty, parents would sell their daughters so that they would be trained as *Ginyeo*.⁹⁹ In *Daybreak in Korea*, Baird tells the story of Pobai's neighbour, a girl named Shining Peach Blossom, who at less than 12 years old was dressed with oil and perfume, and taken by her poverty-stricken parents to the magistracy to become a *Kisaeng*, or *Ginyeo*.¹⁰⁰

Moreover, although the *Kiseang* dancing girls were lowborn, they were among the most intellectual and artistic women of their time in Choson, able to converse with high officers on matters of literature and music. They received training in *junak* (典樂), 'the book of music'; *junjul* (典律), 'the book of regulation'; *juneum* (典音), 'the book of sound', and *junsung* (典聲), 'the book of voice' at Jangrakwon (掌樂院), where the senior *Ginyeo* (老妓), or *aksa* (樂師), meaning music teacher, or *gunghyeonsu* (宮絃首), meaning the head string musician of the palace, took direct responsibility for their education.¹⁰¹ This was at a time when even many noble Choson women were unable to read or write, and certainly had no training in music or poetry.

⁹⁵ Underwood, *Fifteen Years Among the Topknots*, 93.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ See *TaijongSillok* [The annals of the King of Taijong], vol. 6, p. 26b. The year of 3, the month of 11, the day of 18cho. It says about king's relative, named Uian who had a concubine 'Maewha' (who used to be *Ginyeo*). The advisor of King advises to King that 'Maewha' should not be bestowed a title of princess, as she was from *Ginyeo*. All *Sillok* citations refer to the *Choson Wangjo Sillok* 朝鮮王朝實錄 [The annals of the Choson Dynasty]. 48 vols. Reprint. (Seoul: Kuksa Pyeonchan wiwonhoi, 1955-1958).

⁹⁸ See Yi Nungwha, *Chosonheaeowhasa* [朝鮮解語花史, (Hannamseorim: 1927). This book is about the *Ginyeo*'s life in the real state throughout history of Korea. Chapter 29, Kyungseong, (Old Seoul), '有才貌異彩之名妓. 萬德者姓金이오 耽羅良家女也라 幼失母하고 無所歸依 ㄸ야 托妓女爲生이러니 稍長에 官府籍萬德名妓案' (190).

⁹⁹ See above, the case of Shining Peace Blossom in *Daybreak in Korea*.

¹⁰⁰ Baird, *Daybreak in Korea*, 16.

¹⁰¹ See Hyun Moonja, 'Yijoginyeo jedowa saengwhal yeongu' [The research on "Gisaeng" (dancing girls) system and their livelihood] in *Choson jungi nonmunsungip* 朝鮮前期論文選集 [The selected thesis collection in the first half of Choson] vol. 75, Sinbun 6 (身分 6), (Seoul: Korea humanities Institute 韓國人文科學院, 1998), 234-269.

Many *Ginyeo* were also known for their love of and loyalty to the State of Choson. For example, in 1593, having invaded Choson and defeated the Choson forces, Japan held a feast to celebrate its victory. There, one of the *Ginyeo* present, Nongae (1574-1593), sacrificed herself by throwing herself into the river with the head of the Japanese army, an act that was later commemorated as righteous among the people in Choson. Nongae's name was remembered by later generations, and a monument celebrating her patriotic act was erected in Jangsu, Chula region, her hometown.¹⁰²

The dancing girl in *Pokjumie* is a non-domestic woman, and this she has in common with the very different character, *mudang* Sim Ssi. She is independent, receiving payment from the government, and is both intelligent and educated. However, unlike Sim Ssi in *Daybreak in Korea*, the dancing girl is morally condemned. She remains unconverted, and the author Wagner does not give her an opportunity of contributing to a newly converted Christian society in Choson.

Mittome

Mittome,¹⁰³ known before her conversion to Christianity as 'Agie', is the ten-year-old daughter of Mr Ye Kung Su, a *yangban* who lives in rural poverty. Because of his noble class, Mr Yi cannot engage in labour to help improve his household finances. He considers that, 'I am really not to blame, for what gentleman is supposed to know the sordid details of business?'¹⁰⁴ In the past his wife has managed the household through her own labour and the sale of the family property, and now all they have left is a large iron rice pot. Eventually, Mr Ye sends Agie to be a maid to Lady Na, something he is entitled to do as the Confucian male head of the household. However, Lady Na is cruel to Agie, beating her for trivial faults and treating her like a slave. One afternoon, with her friend Lady Paek, Lady Na is intrigued to see the 'queer' looking western missionary, and decides to join the worship service. There Lady Na is embarrassed by the negative reaction to her loud interference and, with her pride as a *yangban* lady somewhat dented, she hurries home. However, rather than following her mistress, the maid Agie remains at the chapel, where she is comforted by the preacher's words and accepts the Christian message. Enraged by this, Lady Na subjects Agie to violent beatings, but cannot force her to give up her new faith. Agie is left severely

¹⁰² See Kim Soo Eop, *Nongae* (Seoul, 2001).

¹⁰³ See Ellasue Canter Wagner, *The Story of Mittome, Kim Su Bang and Other Stories of Korea* (Nashville, TN: Publishing House of the M.E. Church, 1909), 53-76.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.* 54.

injured, and thrown out of the house, where she is discovered by the missionary preacher and taken to receive medical treatment. Once recovered from her injuries, she visits her home and is reunited with her parents; eventually, all three are baptized. At her baptism Agie takes the name Mittome (meaning ‘the faithful’ in Korean), but she weakens and dies. Following Mittome’s death, her mother, who has taken the name Martha, decides to take up evangelical work in her daughter’s memory, and leaves to join the foreign women missionaries in order to receive training as a Bible woman.

Here the central female character Agie, the daughter of a poor but noble Confucian family, undergoes enormous changes upon conversion, clearly signalled in her adoption of a new name. Although a young girl, and a daughter, she is not passive, but acts to lead her parents to conversion and baptism, guiding even her father, the Confucian head of the family, to Christianity.

Mittome’s return to her ‘Confucian’ family after conversion is reminiscent of the story of Pobai, who also evangelizes her natal family, and goes on to care for her grandfather. Both of these characters now show themselves to have become independent and capable of leadership. Mittome’s efforts in bringing her parents to the new faith and arranging for their baptism have a particularly strong impact on her mother, who goes on to seek training as a Bible woman, so that she can introduce more Korean women to the Christian message. However, while Mittome’s strength in leadership may seem to have no place in the Confucian ideal of womanhood, nevertheless that leadership is exercised mainly within her family household, so that she does not step outside the separate sphere.

Martha

Martha, Agie’s mother, demonstrates enormous courage and faith as she leaves to join the female missionaries, to train to become a Bible woman. We do not know whether she makes this decision alone, or whether she discusses it with her husband, Mr Yi. Nor is it clear whether she is accompanied by her husband, although it seems that she is walking alone.¹⁰⁵ However, what does seem clear is that her late daughter has inspired her to change her way of life, such that she makes the decision to become a Bible woman, which requires her to go to a new place, among strangers. We learn that, ‘The mother realized as

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.* 76. ‘Darker, deeper grew the evening shadows; and the lonely, tired woman lingered still in the brow of the hill, watching with unseeing eyes the lights of the city below.’

she never had before what unutterable danger her child had been subjected to and the blessedness of safety she had found in Christ. With this realization of what Christ and his love had meant to her came the over-powering sense of debt to him.¹⁰⁶ Martha, although she sees herself as only a 'poor Korean woman' who cannot even read or write, moves forward in courage, to 'help save other girls as mine has been saved.'¹⁰⁷

As she searches for the light of the missionary educational institution for Bible women, Martha extends Mittome's walk in faith beyond the realm of the family, outside into the larger realm. While we do not learn what lies ahead for Martha, or how she will live her faith, Wagner is surely implying that Martha will break through the boundaries of typical domestic womanhood and its separate spheres, something quite remarkable for traditional Choson.

Toksuni

Toksuni¹⁰⁸ is ten years old, daughter of the third wife of Mr Pak, a *yangban*. She is introduced to Christianity by her friend little Poke, but when little Poke leaves for a girl's school in Songdo, run by women missionaries, at first Toksunie is not allowed to join her. Her father intends to follow the old custom and marry her off as a child, but after speaking to Poke's parents, Mr and Mrs Kim, he is persuaded to allow Toksuni a period of two or three years to study before her marriage. Toksuni thrives in school, and reveals a great love of learning, both in academic subjects such as Chinese language, and domestic subjects, such as sewing. After studying with the girls in the school for some hours, Toksunie goes to see the women missionaries. From them, she learns that due to the school's lack of facilities they are unable to accept any more students for the time being, and she returns home burdened with worries.¹⁰⁹ The setting sounds much like Wagner's first girls' school at Songdo, which later developed into the Holston Institute for Girls.

Among the missionaries' critiques on Choson Confucian womanhood, perhaps the most fundamental was their lack of education. Wagner places this issue at the centre of her story of Toksuni, portraying the circumstances faced by many Korean girls and showing how modern western education could make a difference to their lives. Indeed, Toksuni's desire

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.* 74.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.* 75.

¹⁰⁸ See Ellasue Canter Wagner, *The Story of Toksunie, Kim Su Bang and Other Stories of Korea* (Nashville, TN: Publishing House of the M.E. Church, 1909), 43-52.

¹⁰⁹ 'Toksunie' in *Kim Su Bang and Other Stories of Korea*, 43- 52.

for education is such that she is able to face up to her father with courage, and to undertake a walk of sixty miles in order to get to school.¹¹⁰

The wife of Ye Tai Ya

The story of the wife of Ye Tai Ya, whose own name we never learn, is told more or less in her own words.¹¹¹ Like another of Wagner's characters, Pokjumie, the wife of Ye Tai Ya is evicted from her home, although in her case she is turned out by her mother-in-law, rather than her husband. Born into a poor family, she loses her father when she is only eight years old and, facing destitution and starvation, her mother arranges for her marriage to Ye Tai Ya, who is three years older, and said to be a nice fellow.¹¹² However, after the wedding, now living in her husband's house, she is mistreated by her mother-in-law, to the point that she even contemplates suicide.¹¹³ On her twentieth birthday, her mother-in-law inflicts an unusually violent beating upon her, saying that she is good-for-nothing. Later, Ye Tai Ya takes a second wife, and our character treats her rival unkindly. Finally, after a quarrel with her mother-in-law, she is thrown out onto the street, at midnight. Not knowing where to go, she meets an old woman, a matchmaker, who arranges a marriage with the wealthy Mr Sung, taking a fee for herself. Our character lives as Sung's concubine, but her failure to deliver him a son leads to her being evicted once again. This time she is saved by a Christian Korean woman named Louis.¹¹⁴ Then, one day during worship at a revival gathering at the Christian chapel, she is reunited with her husband Ye Tai Ya, who asks for her forgiveness. Together again in the new faith, they work to help save the people of the village.¹¹⁵ The wife also accepts a homeless Korean girl into her new home, helping the girl just as she had been helped by the Korean Christian woman, Louis. The narrative ends with her leaving the two women missionaries after having shared her life story with them. We learn that her face was 'lighted with joy and happiness.'¹¹⁶

In this narrative, as in 'Pokjumie', although appearing at first to conform to the ideal of domestic womanhood, Ye Tai Ya's wife becomes active, exercising independent leadership in evangelical work, especially in her decision to take a Korean girl into her home. This

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.* 48.

¹¹¹ 'Come unto me' in *Kim Su Bang and Other Stories of Korea*, 77-99. The narrative is written in the first person, with the wife of Ye Tai Ya as narrator.

¹¹² *Ibid.* 79.

¹¹³ *Ibid.* 83.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.* 92.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.* 98.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.* 99.

story is also notable in that it appears to have been told to Wagner on the occasion of a visit to the woman concerned,¹¹⁷ or perhaps at a women's gathering where western female missionaries were present. It seems that the woman was a student in Wagner's class at the school in Songdo.

Kim Su Bang's first wife Mrs Kim, and his second wife Mary

Wagner's Kim Su Bang's first wife Mrs Kim resists the new faith for a long time, despite her husband's conversion. This might be explained, at least in part, by her family circumstances, in that Kim Su Bang favours Mary, his second wife, who has already converted to Christianity. Even though, as a Christian, Kim rejects polygamy and recognizes Mrs Kim as his only wife, she remains stubborn. Only when she is taken to receive treatment from the western medical missionaries, who cure her of her long-term illness, does she finally accept the new faith.

Kim Su Bang's second wife Mary, on the other hand, shows indomitable spirit and strength in making the decision to convert, even risking the loss of her relationship with Kim Su Bang. Mary is the 'little wife' Kim Su Bang has chosen for himself, while his first wife is much older than him, and was chosen by his parents.¹¹⁸ As Wagner describes Mary, she is

a mild little woman, with sweet face and gentle ways, who had not known it was wrong to become a 'little wife.' This woman he [Kim Su Bang] had learned to love, and during the months which followed his return from the city he turned to her with the wonderful truths he had found in the little red books. She was an exceptional Korean woman, for she could read well, and, in fact, strove to make an interesting companion for her husband.¹¹⁹

When Kim Su Bang and Mary accept the new faith, they are confronted by an unexpected crisis: according to Christian doctrine, they must sever their ties for life; the rules of the Church require that Kim Su Bang stick to his first wife, and renounce Mary.¹²⁰ This dilemma¹²¹ was one that was shared by many real Korean converts to Christianity. For example, Suh Kyungsuk, the first Korean pastor in Sorae, found that he could not give up his second wife, and instead gave up his role as pastor.

In the case of Kim Su Bang and Mary, the severing of their marriage ties is painful to both of them, but it is Mary who bears the greatest burden, making the difficult decision to give

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.* 77.

¹¹⁸ 'Kim Su Bang' in *ibid.* 18.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ *Ibid.* 20.

¹²¹ See W M Baird, 'Should polygamists be admitted to the Christian Church?' *The Korean Repository*, (eds. F. Ohlinger, H.G. Appenzeller, and G.H. Jones), Vol.3 (July-September, 1896), 194-198, 229-239, 256-266.

up their married life, and departing with her two children for her mother's house.¹²² Her trials continue as she comes under pressure from Ye Tab Young, a wealthy and influential man of the village, to become his concubine. When Mary rejects him, telling him that she is a Christian, Ye Tab Young arranges to have her abducted. Faced with the group of men intent on carrying her away, Mary reveals her calm yet indomitable spirit, saying:

I know why you are here. You thought you could carry me you away. Look you! I am a Christian; and I am not afraid of you, for *you can't touch me!* The God I serve is God of all. He protects me. I have his promise: 'Lo, I am with you always.' He is with me now; you can't touch me.¹²³

The men flee and, upon hearing what has happened, the local people come to hear Mary speak. Under Mary's strong leadership, a considerable group of Christians is formed, who are then 'anxious for a Church to be organized in their village'.¹²⁴ By this stage Mary has undergone a considerable transformation. From being a subservient second wife to Kim Su Bang, striving to be a perfect companion and knowing that her status could be usurped at any time by a younger or more attractive new wife, she has become emboldened in the new faith and strengthened by the trials she has undergone. Not only does she remain steadfast in her new belief, but she defends herself against Ye Tab Young's attempt at 'widow-stealing' and goes on to bear witness as 'a child of God', visiting house to house and leading many to Christ.¹²⁵ Mary becomes revered among the people in her village, respected as a female leader and listened to by the very people who once sneered at her.

3.2.3. Jean Perry and her Choson Korean Confucian women characters

Perry's novels, *The Man in Grey* and *Chilgoopie the Glad*, seem to have been written while Perry and her companion Pash were working together in a home for destitute children. Her *Uncle Mac the Missionary* is set against the background of the Korean revival movement, which began in 1903 in Wonsan, and continued across the country until 1907, bringing about the repentance and conversion of very many women and men. Perry's stories give us some idea of how these conversions came about, and of the huge changes experienced by the individuals concerned, especially Korean women.

According to the Confucian feminine ideal, women were not expected to speak in public. Their role was to listen to men obediently, and in silence. Even at home, women would rarely speak except with their most intimate family and associates, and usually at night

¹²² 'Kim Su Bang,' 21.

¹²³ *Ibid.* 29-30.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.* 31.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

rather than in the daytime.¹²⁶ In the revival meetings, this Confucian custom was broken, and Korean women were encouraged to speak up in public.¹²⁷ A revival gathering, in Pyeng Yang in February 1907, attracted more than 2000 believers, of whom more than half were women,¹²⁸ and there some Korean women were moved to throw off their sorrows and sufferings, confessing their sins publicly with outpourings of emotion. Kim Seji,¹²⁹ a Korean Bible woman who was assisting the women missionaries, was reported as crying and beating on the floor as she spoke, confessing her sins in public. While such gatherings were certainly not routine settings in early twentieth century Korea, nevertheless, for women to allow their voices to be heard in this way caused cracks in the gender code, and contributed to the creation of momentum for further change in more formal terms.

Old Lady Yin and Mrs Hwang in *Uncle Mac the Missionary*

The emergence of Korean women leaders in the Korean church took place against the background of the revival meetings and prayer gatherings that were held in the early 1900s in Korea. Perry's work paints a picture of this period. For example, in *Uncle Mac the Missionary*, Perry writes of the success of the missionary couple Mr and Mrs Bright, describing how local Korean people would pack the nightly gatherings in the meeting room at No-dul.¹³⁰ Particularly noticeable is the dauntlessness and courage of the Korean women who confess in these gatherings. The old lady Yin suddenly rises amid the crowd of women, interrupting the missionary's sermon, 'shaking out her calico skirt' and exclaiming 'Confess! Confess! Sinners, confess! All unholy are we, and full of sins we only half remember, so many are they- confess!'¹³¹ A young woman, 'standing erect and still and looking straight before her', bravely asks the congregation to pray for her youngest son.¹³² At the end of

¹²⁶ See H. N. Allen, 'Women's Weapon', *Things Korean* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1908), 97. In traditional Choson, women would visit their friends at night during 'women's time,' usually engaged in 'gossip to which these women of narrow lives are so given.'

¹²⁷ See Yi Sookjin, 'Daibuheung Undongi Yeosung Gongganui Changchulgwa Yeosungjoochae Tansaeng' [The creation of women's space and the birth of women agents in the Great Revival movement period], *Hankuk Gidokgyowa Yeoksa* [Korean Christianity and History], vol.31, (September, 2009), 43-68.

¹²⁸ See William Noble & George Harbor Jones, *The Religious Awakening of Korea: An Account of the Revival in the Korean Churches in 1907*, (New York: Board of Foreign Missions Methodist Episcopal Church, 1908), 12-13.

¹²⁹ Kim Seji here may be Sadie Kim, the Korean Bible woman. See Noble, Mattie Wilcox, *Victorious Lives of Early Christians in Korea: Sketches from Victorious Lives of Early Christians in Korea*. The First Book of Biographies and Autobiographies of Early Christians in the Protestant Church in Korea. Compiled and written in the Korean language by Mattie Wilcox Noble; translated into the English language by the compiler. Christian Literature Society of Korea, 1927. 'The Story of Sadie Kim,' 127-143.

¹³⁰ *Uncle Mac the Missionary*, 31.

¹³¹ *Ibid.* 33-34.

¹³² *Ibid.* 35.

another meeting Mrs Hwang, a mother of three sons and respected in the neighbourhood, speaks up to ask ‘Is this true or false, this doctrine? If true, it is the thing I have waited for these many, many years. If false, there is no hope anywhere for any of us... I have come here to find the Truth. Is there any to be found?’¹³³ This bravery in speaking in public is particularly notable, since it demonstrates an apparently radical departure from the Confucian and Victorian norms of womanhood, which demand that women’s voices are heard only in their private female sphere.

Young Mrs Min in Perry’s *the Man in Grey*

In *The Man in Grey*, Perry makes it clear that one of the most important purposes for her mission in Choson had to do with ‘uplifting girlhood and womanhood in that far-off land.’¹³⁴ She meditates upon this idea through her character Mr Min, who asks himself, as he goes through the process of conversion, ‘had his [the missionary’s] young wife really the same right to all this as he had?’¹³⁵ Perry emphasizes the lot of women in Choson through the character of the young Mrs Min, who is mistreated as a wife and as a daughter-in-law, at least before the conversion of her husband and mother-in-law. Elderly Mrs Min diminishes her daughter-in-law at every opportunity, in terms such as: ‘You speak when you’re spoken to, and not till then, *lazy-bones*’¹³⁶ ‘Where is my table, *laziness*?’¹³⁷ ‘Hurry up, *sleepy-head*, or I’ll see that you do,’¹³⁸ but young Mrs Min endures it quietly, either because she has nobody to whom she can complain, or because such treatment is the norm, and only to be expected.

The change in Young Mrs Min’s standing comes with her husband’s conversion. Now, Mr Min sends his wife to a mothers’ meeting at the gatehouse of the church, run by Mrs Bright, the missionary wife;¹³⁹ he also works hard to spend an hour every day teaching young Mrs Min to read.¹⁴⁰ The young wife is accepted at the table to eat with her husband and mother-in-law, instead of being confined to a corner of the kitchen, as she was before. Yet while Perry shows how Mr Min’s conversion¹⁴¹ leads eventually to the conversion of the whole

¹³³ *Ibid.* 103.

¹³⁴ *The Man in Grey*, 19.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.* 58.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.* 13.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.* 15.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ *Ibid.* 64.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.* 65.

¹⁴¹ Mr Min’s conversion is shown in his changed attitude toward his family, especially in his new concern for his wife: One morning he comes upon his mother beating her daughter-in-law, and for the first time jumps to

family,¹⁴² including his young wife,¹⁴³ she does not show in any detail just how dramatically this has affected Mrs Min's standing as woman in terms of her leadership or independent spirit. Certainly, Mrs Min has been lifted out of the confines of traditional Confucian domestic womanhood, yet she remains within the 'separate sphere' of domesticity allotted to femininity by the Victorian norm of gender division.

'Old Korean Woman' in *the Man in Grey* and 'Grannie' in *Uncle Mac the Missionary*

In *The Man in Grey*, we meet an old Korean woman who used to be a sorceress. Although Perry does not relate her conversion process, she is now a believer, a member of the church where the missionaries Mr and Mrs Bright are working.¹⁴⁴ We see how the elderly woman steps forward to comfort mourners at the funeral of the Brights' baby daughter, Nell, speaking with confidence in public, even giving an impromptu speech:

Eighty long years have I eaten rice, and fought with devils, and never found peace nor rest, nor knew any joy till I saw you... Beautiful and good, pure as snow, cleaner than a snow-drift... You rested in my arms, and never feared the old ugly sorceress... When you are not here, how can I stay? Spotless and pure one, spotless and pure! Eighty years have I eaten rice, and uglier every day. But you smiled in my face, Baby-ah! Baby-ah! And you loved me!¹⁴⁵

This speech could be taken as presenting a starkly contrasting and unbalanced image of East and West, where the East is the 'poor crouched figure' of the woman, and the 'pure, spotless' baby Nell represents the West. Nevertheless, it is notable that this elderly Korean woman takes a prominent leadership role in the funeral service for the dead infant, the child of Mr and Mrs Bright. On her own initiative, and showing great courage, she offers strength and wisdom to the mourners.

This character enters the story again upon the death of another child, the son of the new believer Mr Min. At this point the local men and women are thrown into despair, and blame Mr Min's family for not following the traditional customs:

'Didn't we say so? No charms used when he was born; no straw rope or charcoal across the gateway; no red earth sprinkled; nothing done that should have been done according to ancient custom.' The whole place was in commotion and Mr Min sat on the veranda as

his wife's defence: 'Stop at once; you'll kill her!... Should she die for spoiling the food?' (60) The two women are equally startled at this unexpected intervention, which the author tells us is because he has a 'new heart', which means the new faith (63).

¹⁴² Mrs Min the elder's conversion is shown in her visit to the missionary house the night after the funeral of the missionaries' baby daughter, Nell (97-98).

¹⁴³ While young Mrs Min's formal conversion follows that of her husband, she has already been visiting the chapel alone at every opportunity (39). After receiving a Scriptural card from the missionary's wife, she has prayed for her husband to find 'new heart' (63).

¹⁴⁴ See Perry, *The Man in Grey*, 46.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.* 95.

one stunned; and his mother alternately beat her breast with both hands, or threw herself wailing on the ground.¹⁴⁶

As Mr and Mrs Min face this crisis, Mr Bright the missionary tries in vain to comfort them. Once again it is the old woman who enters to speak in public as a comforter to the Min family and those around them.¹⁴⁷ In doing so she helps not only the bereaved couple Mr and Mrs Min, but also the western missionary couple who have tried, and failed, to resolve the situation. Only the old woman can calm the commotion among the village people, with her powerful impromptu speech to the crowd gathered at Min's house.¹⁴⁸

Would the powerful leadership exercised by this elderly Choson woman have interfered with the leadership of Korean males, or that of the western male missionaries? While Perry does not answer this question directly, certainly the picture she paints of this character is unreservedly positive, indicating her strength in new faith, as she comforts and reconciles families that have been almost broken by the deaths of their young children.

Perry's *Uncle Mac the Missionary* features many of the same characters who appear in *The Man in Grey*, and tells of the continuing success of the work of the missionary couple, Mr and Mrs Bright. 'Grannie' in this novel appears to be the same character as the old Korean woman in *The Man in Grey*. Hearing of the Min family's anxiety as to Mac the missionary's exhaustion, and their desire to do something to ease his loneliness now that he is apart from his American girlfriend Agnes, she decides to call on Mac herself. Urging him not to neglect his health, she tells him, 'you have given up much of your own food, and have changed many of your habits to draw you nearer to us all. This is praiseworthy, but you must be careful of your health, and not run risks.'¹⁴⁹ Taking over the management of Mac's domestic affairs, she continues to emphasize that he must take care of himself, and that, 'You need not give everything away,' knowing that he had given a good coat the week before to a beggar who sold it at the next market town.¹⁵⁰ Perry does not tell us exactly how Mac responds to these remarks, but she does indicate that the influence exerted by Grannie is a positive one, as Mac writes in his diary of taking tea with the old lady that, 'it was the loveliest tea-party he had ever given. ... She seemed the hostess and guest in one.'¹⁵¹ When Mac dies suddenly of smallpox, Grannie is also the one who comforts, and comes to be befriended by, Agnes, who travels from America to Korea.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.* 131.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.* 133-134.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.* 137.

¹⁴⁹ *Uncle Mac the Missionary*, 91.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.* 93.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.* 94.

Grannie, we learn, had never heard of Jesus until she was over sixty,¹⁵² yet we see that she exercises powerful and effective leadership among the Korean congregation, which goes well beyond the Confucian and Victorian ideals of domestic womanhood.

Hulmonie in *Chilgoopie the Glad*

In Perry's novel *Chilgoopie the Glad*, it is Hulmonie ('old woman') who leads the congregation in prayers, and 'rescues' the inexperienced author missionary.¹⁵³ When Ko, a young Korean man, comes as a beggar to the door of the children's home, the missionary struggles to deal with the situation, as strictly speaking, under the project Woman's Work for Woman, she has no authority to deal with him directly. Eventually, Ko is allowed to stay, and becomes a believer; then when he falls ill, he asks the author missionary to arrange for his baptism. At the impromptu baptism ceremony, the missionary, taking the place of the absent minister, lacks confidence and 'looked vaguely round, as if expecting a minister to rise from some corner of the room.'¹⁵⁴ She is rescued from her difficulty by Hulmonie, who leads the congregation in prayer, saying 'Our Father, loving and wise, the lady whom we love knows not what to do. Show her, make it plain.'¹⁵⁵ Here it is interesting that the female missionary is the passive character, while Hulmonie is active and takes leadership. The Hulmonie in this story appears not to be the same old woman who appears in *the Man in Grey* and *Mac the Missionary*. This character, we learn, was for thirty years one among many wives. Yet once she had heard the Gospel and undergone conversion she readily took on a leadership role, in prayer and in supporting the work of the missionary, thus ensuring the success of Ko's baptism ceremony.

3.2.4. Lillias Underwood and her Choson Korean Confucian women characters

Like the other women missionaries, Underwood appears to have viewed the situation of Choson Confucian women as one of bondage and suffering. Arranged child marriage, in which young girls were taken to the home of the bridegroom, a stranger to them, to a life of domestic servitude; concubinage and polygamy; and the lack of education for girls were frequent targets of the western women's criticisms. For Underwood, it was the first of these

¹⁵² *Ibid.* 169.

¹⁵³ Perry, *Chilgoopie the Glad*: 'I was in great straits, like a general whose army had got out of line, when just as I was deciding, or trying to decide, what to say, a Hand mightier than mine laid hold of us, and the weak, quavering voice of an old woman lately come to Christ like a child, broke the silence - "Let us pray"' (48-49).

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.* 58.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.* 60.

evils, early arranged marriage, that cast the largest and darkest shadow over women's lives. Discussing the very different lots of Choson girls in child marriages and American girls in boarding school, Underwood asserts that the destiny of Choson girls 'under the heavy hand of a mother-in-law' is hard and burdensome, filled with 'the ignorance, the narrowness, the superstition', where there is 'no inspiration, no vision, no God who loves and pities them, who has stooped to share their burdens,'¹⁵⁶ Meanwhile, these Korean girls have no rights, and no access to education.

Underwood's concern extends to the women of the Korean court, who 'are taken as children and young girls from the middle and lower classes, and entirely separated from all others, to the service of the majesties.' They have to endure the publicity of the palace, which indicates that they do not have high rank in their own right, and are respected only on account of their relations to the royal family. These poor palace women are 'hardened, coarse and vulgar, their appearance only calls forth compassion.'¹⁵⁷

Underwood also makes clear her opposition to the practice of concubinage. It seems that her observations on this subject draw on a particular experience in Song Do, where she was invited to accompany her husband to the house of his great friend, a Korean gentleman. There, in the large *anbang*, Underwood met a graceful Korean woman with her children; the woman was dressed in white Chinese silk, and extremely self-possessed and cordial. Later, it transpired that the woman was a concubine, in a household where there was a first and rightful wife, who had no children.¹⁵⁸ Underwood describes the status of concubines in Choson, noting that they do not come from the same rank as first wives, and are not permitted to meet ladies, the first wives of high-ranking men, on an equal footing; moreover their children are not fully legitimate, and have no legal rights to inherit their father's property.¹⁵⁹

Yet while Underwood critiques the miserable destiny of Choson Korean girls and women, she nevertheless recognizes their strong moral and leadership qualities. In particular, she maintains that in times of family crisis, it is often the woman who takes control of the situation, counselling and guiding her husband. She might even resort to physical means. Underwood describes how in Choson a women would sometimes grab her husband's topknot like a handle, and drag him home by the hair. Underwood is full of admiration for

¹⁵⁶ Underwood, *With Tommy Tompkins*, 230.

¹⁵⁷ Underwood, *Fifteen Years Among the Topknots*, 10-11.

¹⁵⁸ *With Tommy Tompkins*, 293.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.* 294.

this method, and notes that ‘it is a great pity men do not wear their hair in this way in America. We women who favor women’s rights would soon find it a mighty handle by which to secure them, for in the hands of a discerning woman it is indeed an instrument of unlimited possibilities.’¹⁶⁰ She describes how:

By one of these well-tied arrangements have I beheld a justly irate wife dragging home her drunken husband from the saloon; and firmly grasping this, I have seen more than one indignant female administering that corporal punishment which her lord and master no doubt richly deserved. The Korean wife stands and serves her husband while he eats, she works while he smokes, but when family affairs come to a certain crisis, she takes the helm (that is to say, the top-knot) in hand, and puts the ship about.¹⁶¹

Underwood was also deeply impressed by the Korean Queen Min, praising her high intellect, strength of character, and warm hearted and generous impulses, and noting that ‘she possessed a very intellectual idea of the great nations of the world and their governments’, and that ‘she was a subtle and able diplomatist and usually outwitted her keenest opponents.’¹⁶² As Ellinwood points out, given the queen’s ‘stronger mind and higher moral character than her royal husband, she was his wise counsellor and the chief bulwark of his precarious power.’¹⁶³

Underwood’s writings contain some notable portraits of converted Korean women who exercise strong leadership, as explained in more detail below:

Mrs K. and the wife of Mr Yu

Mrs K was a Korean acquaintance of Underwood, a highly respectable upper-middle class woman. She and her husband were in charge of caretaking the grounds, house and shrine in the private cemetery of a Prince, for which they received a generous salary, their only source of income. Upon their conversion to Christianity, however, they gave up their position, without any wavering or reservation, and became ‘indefatigable Christian workers,’ preaching the Word and distributing tracts, hymn books, and catechisms in local villages. Twice a week Mrs K attended church and Bible class, asking intelligent questions and, when questioned herself, ready with answers showing how the work of the Holy Spirit was revealed in her own experience. Although not rich, the couple were of a high class, yet this did not prevent Mr K from carrying a heavy load on his shoulder as he travelled on his evangelical trips; nor did it deter Mrs K from being seen in public, and she walked by her

¹⁶⁰ *Fifteen Year Among the Topknots*, 50.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶² *Ibid.* 24.

¹⁶³ See *Ibid*, Preface by FF Ellinwood, vii.

husband's side, stopping to preach the gospel to the women, while her husband preached to the men. All their work was entirely voluntary, at their own expense. After her husband's death, Mrs K continued in the work, sometimes going to remote places to holding Bible classes for women or ignorant new believers. Underwood makes clear her admiration of Mrs K when she ends her story with the question 'Is not this a woman of whom her Lord would say "Her price is far above rubies"?'¹⁶⁴

Yet while Mrs K's devotion and leadership are clear and admirable, it seems that her conversion was a smooth and untroubled process. This was not always the case. For example, Mrs Yu initially resisted the new faith, against the will of her newly converted husband. While Mr Yu had studied and accepted the new doctrine, and insisted that his whole family should become believers, his wife would not listen to him, and clung to the age-old inherited custom. When Mr Yu tried to force her into submission, 'gripping her by the back of the neck with his mighty fist', she 'recoiled from this sudden turning to new ideas of which she knew nothing, and regarded it as a drunken and insane freak of her husband, who had sorely tried her patience for many a long year, but never as sorely as now.'¹⁶⁵ Korean women, Underwood tells us, 'are long-suffering, and endure much, but they are also obstinate and very conservative, and there are some things they cannot be forced into doing.'¹⁶⁶

Mr Yu then felt obliged to pray for his wife. While previously he has merely accepted the new faith in intellectual terms, now we see him change in spirit. 'Upon his change in his heart, eventually his wife and whole family became truly converted.'¹⁶⁷ Moreover, having finally accepted Christianity, Mrs Yu pours her energies into active involvement in the church, and becomes a model of devotion.

As shown in the portrayal of Mrs Yu, Choson women were not simply passive; they could be stubborn or conservative, and resist their husbands' ideas. They also had vast reserves of energy and capability, often revealed in their service to the church as newly converted Christian believers. This presents a sharp contrast to the prevailing view among westerners of the time, including the missionaries, who saw Korean women as helpless and without power.

¹⁶⁴ See Underwood, 'Sketches of Some Korean women', *The Korea Mission Field* (April 1906), 105-106.

¹⁶⁵ *With Tommy Tompkins*, 165.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.* 167.

‘Powerful Young Bride’ married into a heathen family

In *Fifteen Years Among the Topknots* Underwood tells the story of a young bride, a convert to Christianity, who marries into a heathen family. She does not give up her new faith, but eventually leads all the family members to conversion. According to Underwood, this was just one example of a pattern being repeated in many believers’ communities across Choson.¹⁶⁸

On the evangelical trip she took with her husband to Whang Hai Do, the Yellow Sea Province, Underwood had come across a small farm village where just one or two families had ignored the scoffing of their neighbours and come out to meet the missionary party, giving them as cordial ‘a welcome as though they had been lords, and conducted them almost with reverence, certainly with devotion and respect into their humble dwellings.’¹⁶⁹ Lillias Underwood realized that ‘it called for considerable moral courage, and firm devotion to the cause, to enable these poor peasants to brave public sentiment,’¹⁷⁰ and was particularly struck by the fact that the first Christian to have come to the village had arrived as a young bride.

Now the position of a bride is not under any circumstances an easy one. ...How then is a meek and frightened young girl to preach a strange religion to her superiors, how is she to avoid laboring at ironing, washing, sewing, etc., on Sundays, how to escape the preparations of idolatrous worship, and participation in these forbidden rites? And yet all this dared this one little Saxie[young bride], alone many miles from friends and supporters, many miles from a church or teachers, in a whole village full of heathen people. Her surprised and enraged family protested, scolded and beat her. She was covered with reviling, reproaches and ridicule, and finally threatened with the greatest disgrace that can befall a woman, that of being flung back upon her parents, scorned, deserted, unfit for her husband’s house.¹⁷¹

It must have been extremely difficult to withstand such hostility alone, while witnessing good faith. But the bride’s steadfastness was rewarded. Her husband and parents-in-law yielded to the influence of her life and example, ‘so little by little the whole family put away their old idols and superstitions, and led by the youngest, joined in the worship of the One True God. Then, little by little, the family living next that one, also, came to believe, and these were the people whom the Wons [Underwood] came to encourage, teach and receive into the visible Church.’¹⁷²

As we can see, therefore, Underwood’s writings bear witness to the existence of some remarkable Korean women, who upon conversion to the new faith take on significant

¹⁶⁸ *Fifteen Years Among the Topknots*, 218.

¹⁶⁹ *With Tommy Tompkins*, 158.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.* 159.

¹⁷² *With Tommy Tompkins*, 160.

leadership roles. In doing so they break out from the confines of Confucian domestic womanhood, and sometimes move beyond the boundaries imposed by the Victorian feminine ideal, in which women belonged to a separate, domestic, sphere.

Chapter 4. Influences on the Social Standing of Korean Women

As shown in Chapter 3, drawing evidence from the female missionaries' own narratives, many Korean women experienced dramatic changes in their social standing after conversion. The enhanced status of women such as Perry's old Korean woman in *The Man in Grey*, Wagner's eponymous heroine in the story 'Mittome' in *Kim Su Bang*, and Baird's Sim Ssi in *Daybreak in Korea* seems to have lifted them outside the boundaries of Confucian womanhood, and granted them roles outside the domestic sphere reserved for women according to the Victorian feminine ideal.

Indeed, it appears from other evidence that conversion led to dramatic changes in the consciousness of Confucian Korean women, which were revealed and exemplified especially in the revival meetings held in Korea between 1903 (Wonsan) and 1907 (Pyongyang). The Wonsan Revival Movement was known to have been initiated and catalysed by two female missionaries, Mary C. White and Louise Hoard McCully,¹ and 'women's role and participation were an indispensable part of the movements.'² The changes in women's consciousness and their religious experiences through the revivals became 'a significant topic in the study of historical and women's theology.'³

For traditional Confucian women, speaking in public was not encouraged; their voices should only be heard in exceptional circumstances, and through necessity. The right to speak in public lay mainly with men. Even during the marriage ceremony, the bride was usually expected to remain silent, thus exhibiting a feminine virtue.⁴ However, in the revival meetings and gatherings held in the early 1900s, this Confucian custom appears to have been broken, and the traditional gender code and constraints violated, as Korean women stepped forward to speak up in public.⁵

The Korea Mission Field of April 1906 carries a report of a revival meeting, a joint gathering of Methodists and Presbyterians, held at Jung Dong church in Seoul in January of

¹ Lakh Joon (George) Paik, *The History of the Protestant Missions in Korea, 1832-1910* (Seoul, 1971), 367.

² Yi Deokju, 'Jayoowa Haebang, grigo Silcheon: Chogi Hankuk Gidokgyo Yeosungsa Ihae (1887-1920)' [Freedom, Liberation, and Practice: Understanding Early Christian Women in Korea (1887-1920)] in *Hankuk Gyohoiwa Yeosung [Korean Church and Women]*, The Korean Church Research Center (ed.), (Seoul, 2013), 55.

³ *Ibid.*, 63.

⁴ Refer to *Daybreak in Korea* concerning the marriage ceremony and the silence of bride.

⁵ See Yi Sookjin, 'Daibuheung Undongi Yeosung Gongganui Changchulgwa Yeosungjoochae Tansaeng' [The creation of women's space and the birth of women agents in the Great Revival movement period], *Hankuk Gidokgyowa Yeoksa* [Korean Christianity and History], vol.31, (September, 2009), 43

that year. During the sermon, one Korean woman suddenly got up, thus interrupting the male speaker, and spoke before the whole congregation, saying that she had come to realize a sin in her, which before she had not recognized as a sin.⁶ This was not an isolated incident. In May 1906 *Grisdo Shinmoon* [The Christian News] reported that at a gathering in Kimwha church, a Korean woman named Shin busi had removed her *jegori* jacket, proclaiming that we should all remove our sins in the same way. Her gesture moved other people in the congregation to confess their sins publicly,⁷ while some young women went even further, going out onto the streets and shouting to the men and women who came to see this exotic scene, evangelizing them.⁸

Also in 1907, at the Hamheung region joint gathering of ‘Sakyunghoi,’⁹ a Korean Bible woman named Hanna would attend every revival gathering, praying fervently and openly and testifying her faith before all. Even men expressed their respect for her, and once she was asked by men to lead the public prayer.¹⁰ Her leadership in a mixed congregation revival gathering went beyond what was expected of not just Confucian women, but also western Victorian women according to the ideology of separate spheres, who could only minister to other women. Indeed, in *The Man in Grey*, Perry describes how, due to the Victorian gender ideology of separate spheres, a woman missionary was prevented from leading a mixed gathering at an annual Conference meeting.¹¹

4.1. The Impact of Western Women Missionaries and their Domestic Womanhood on the Role of Women

How could this change in the standing of Korean women have come about? Some of the women mentioned above seem to have taken on roles that were clearly beyond the norms of Confucian womanhood, while they were also quite different from what was expected according to the Victorian feminine ideal. While the converted Pobai in Baird’s *Daybreak in Korea* and Mittomie in Wagner’s *Kim Su Bang* seem to break through the Confucian traditional gender code, nevertheless they exercise their leadership within their own families,

⁶ Refer to Samuel F. Moore, ‘The revival in Seoul,’ *The Korea Mission Field*, 2, no. 6 (April, 1906), 116.

⁷ See Lee Won Ha, ‘Kimhwadigyeongteo Soonhwanseo Revival Meeting’ *The Christian News* [그리스도신문], 15 March, 1906, Gyohoi Tongshin (Church Communication), 6.

⁸ See Mattie Wilcox Noble, ‘Reminiscences of Early Christians in Korea,’ in Charles A. Sauer, *Within the Gate* (Seoul: The Korean Methodist News Service, 1934), 67-77.

⁹ Sakyunghoi 查經會 means a church members’ meeting for studying Bible for a certain period of time.

¹⁰ See L. H. McCully, ‘Fruits of the Revival,’ *The Korea Mission Field*, 3, no.6 (June, 1907), 83-84.

¹¹ See Perry, *The Man in Grey*, 108-110. Miss Smart’s leadership in a mixed missionary gathering was questioned.

and thus remain within the domestic sphere allotted to women by the Victorian ideal. However, the old woman in Perry's *The Man in Grey*, Martha in Wagner's 'Mittome' in *Kim Su Bang* and Baird's Sim Ssi in *Daybreak in Korea* all step outside the domestic 'female' realm, exercising leadership as strong female agents in the public sphere.

The dramatic changes experienced by these women might perhaps be credited, at least in part, to the missionary influence, and especially to the women missionaries and their Woman's Work for Woman. However, if so, this seems to have been an unforeseen or unintended consequence, since in formal terms the women missionaries' work for women concentrated on transferring the western ideal of domestic femininity, rather than any radical idea of womanhood seeking for rights and equality with men. This is clearly demonstrated in the stated purposes of the Korean women's education institutions founded by the female missionaries, such as Ewha (F. Scanton) and Holston (Wagner), which sought to help their pupils to grow in domestic womanhood as assistants to men, rather than as independent agents for change.

This promotion of domestic womanhood can be seen clearly in two of Baird's short stories, 'Ko Young Gyu Jeon' and 'Bu Bu ui Mo Bon' ['Christian Models for the ideal Husband and the Wife'],¹² both written in Korean. These narratives present an ideal image of femininity within a Christian marriage, where the wife is helpmate to her husband. In 'Bu Bu ui Mo Bon', the first part of the narrative concentrates on Jinjoo, a Korean Christian woman who is preparing for her marriage to Park Myungsil. Here, Jinjoo's mother is seen advising her daughter on how to behave as a wife; she emphasizes that in order to make the marriage a success, a wife must be obedient to her husband. The second part describes the couple's married life at Myungsil's home, where they live with Myungsil's mother. Here we see events through the eyes of Myungsil, the Korean husband, rather than his wife.

This story is interesting for what it tells us of Baird's apparent view on the relations between a husband and wife in Christian marriage, which she portrays as far from egalitarian. We see this particularly in two analogies used by Baird. First of all, before the marriage Myungsil ponders over how he needs to behave to be a good husband. He finds the answer when looking at the Korean grapes on the mountain, where the wild grape stems are draped over a large tree. The tree is taller and stronger, and supports the weak drooping vines, but the vines curl around and lean upon the tree such that in their closeness, both the

¹² Annie Baird, *Two Short Stories: Ko Young Gyu Jeon and Bu Bu ui Mo Bon*, (Seoul: Korean Religious Tract Society, 1911).

tree and the vine are protected from the strong northern wind and cold snow.¹³ Here the tree symbolizes the husband, and the vines the wife. The second analogy is presented through the words of JinJoo's mother, who, when asked by her daughter what she should do if her husband-to-be does not act as he should as a Christian male, answers by quoting from the Scriptures, saying that a man is like the back of a bow and a woman the string; the string is capable of bending the back of the bow if she is willing, but she needs to go with the back of the bow in obedience, so that the bow can fulfil its function.¹⁴

Thus, in this narrative, Baird emphasizes the feminine virtue of obedience to a husband, and its necessity in order for a Christian marriage to prosper. Even if the husband does not act according to the ideal Christian model, the wife must still follow him in obedience. The two analogies mentioned above stress harmony between husband and wife, but not equal relations between them.

This lack of equality is also implied in Jinjoo's parents' view on their daughter's marriage. Jinjoo's father complains that, 'having a daughter causes this trouble, which is from their birth to their being grown up, they are becoming precious like flowers blooming ... and finally the husband whose personality we do not know comes and takes the daughter from us.'¹⁵ From now on, 'whether our beloved daughter spends her life in a good way or not, is up to the boy,'¹⁶ thus indicating the power of husband over wife, his importance and relative strength in the marriage.

This inequality is exemplified as the narrative unfolds. After their marriage, Jinjoo becomes pregnant. Concerned for his wife, Myungsil tells her not to do heavy domestic work. However, there is nothing to suggest that Myungsil discusses this with his mother, who supervises Jinjoo's domestic tasks. Nor is there any hint that Jinjoo discusses her husband's advice with her mother-in-law. Instead, we are told simply that Jinjoo obeys the advice and stops doing heavy domestic tasks. This clearly indicates that the son and husband is the centre of power and head of the household; he can make decisions for the whole family without consulting either his wife or his mother.

Myungsil's decision angers his mother. She is used to the traditional Confucian concept of *hyo*, in which a parent's needs and will should be prior to the needs and wills of a son and

¹³ *Ibid.* 22.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* 25.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* 23.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* 27.

daughter-in-law, and she now seems at a loss.¹⁷ However, she does not challenge her son directly. Instead she directs her anger against Jinjoo, resulting in disharmony between the two women. Although Jinjoo seeks to compromise with the traditional view, by obeying her mother-in-law, it is Myungsil who stands firmly against his mother's Confucian assumptions. Here, Myungsil could be said to have caused the problem, but he alone escapes its effects.¹⁸

Neither Jinjoo nor Myungsil's mother are in a position to initiate changes to the family structure. Only the man, Myungsil, can do this, while the two women are portrayed as subordinate, limited to feminine domesticity and submissiveness, which resonates with the typical Victorian concept of womanhood.

The story 'Ko Young Gyu Jeon' presents a similar picture of domestic and submissive womanhood. The story comprises five chapters, of which the first and the third focus on the male title character, while the second and the fourth focus on his wife, Kil Bobae, who is portrayed as obedient, patient, and self-sacrificing. The final chapter is about their reconciliation. The story begins with Ko as an orphaned child; he ponders the meaning and purpose of his life, but finds no answers. Later, his grandmother arranges his marriage with Kil Bobae, who proves to be a hardworking and dutiful wife, despite Ko's indifference.¹⁹ Knowing the importance of sons according to the Confucian tradition, Bobae commits herself to doing 'one hundred-day-prayers' at the Buddhist temple, but disappoints her husband by bearing three daughters. For this failure to bear a son Ko leaves Bobae, but rather than blaming him, she waits patiently for him to return, her actions here resonating with the analogy of the man as the back of the bow and the woman as the string, raised in Baird's other short story, 'Bu Bu ui Mo Bon.'

After her husband leaves the family home, Bobae tries her best to make her way in the world. She ploughs and weeds the field, brings in the harvest, and gathers wood for the winter, but the household is poor and the crops do not do well. So worries that her family will starve. Pondering on this, she wonders whether she has committed a sin against the gods, and tries to propitiate them with prayers and offerings of rice. One day she receives a letter from her husband Ko, telling her that he is in prison and she should sell the field to raise the money for his bail. Bobae follows this instruction without question; even though

¹⁷ In the traditional Confucian family, the daughter-in-law was usually under the authority of the mother-in-law, and the son would not interfere with domestic matters. (cf. Queen Sohe, *Naehun*, trans. with annotation by Lee Sunyoung and Lee Seunghee, Seoul, 2011).

¹⁸ Annie Baird, *Two Short Stories: Ko Young Gyu Jeon and Bubuui Mobonjeon*, 33-34.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* 5.

she now faces the problem of how to live and provide for her daughters, and wonders why a woman's lot is so miserable, she does not blame Ko. It is at this time of crisis that one of Bobae's neighbours, a Korean Christian woman, calls on her to share the Christian message. Believing in the new doctrine of Jesus and its redemptive power,²⁰ Bobae is converted to the Christian faith. Meanwhile, Ko has undergone conversion while in prison, and returns to ask his wife's forgiveness. He vows that he will never again reproach her, even if she bears more daughters. The couple reconcile, and go on to create a Christian home.

Yet while Ko Young Gyu is pictured as a rounded character, who undergoes real change after his conversion, Bobae is apparently basically unchanged.²¹ She remains a submissive and domestic woman, an obedient daughter before marriage, and then an obedient wife. The change in her standing within the marriage is brought about by Ko Young Gyu's conversion, not her own. Even within their renewed Christian household, Ko Young Gyu is a free agent, while Bobae is limited to a traditional domestic existence.²² It is notable that in Bobae's closed traditional world she has to hear the new doctrine from a female neighbour, who herself knows very little about it but only 'heard from a woman who came from the local government office,' and reports that 'Jesus is not oppressing women, but rather has compassion for women.'²³

Moreover, although both Ko and Bobae undergo conversion, it is not clear whether their becoming Christians has affected their relations as husband and wife, leading to a more egalitarian relationship. We do see that Ko overcomes his desire to have only male offspring, a preference that was rooted in the traditional Confucian system, and hence in this Christian marriage daughters have won a place, even if they still play a secondary role. As for Bobae, however, even after conversion her essentially subservient position does not change. Indeed, Baird seems not to be supporting an idea of egalitarian relations in marriage. Rather, the ideal woman fulfils her role in domesticity, and a wife's obedience to her husband is emphasized as an important feminine virtue.

The image of domestic womanhood presented in these stories by Baird is very similar to that promoted in Wagner's *Pokjumie* and in Perry's character the young Mrs Min in *The Man in Grey*. These female characters are all notable for their Victorian Christian feminine virtues of submissiveness, piety, domesticity, and purity. This image becomes even clearer

²⁰ See *ibid.* 15-16.

²¹ See Kwak, Seung-sook, 'Annie Baird Shinsosul Yeongu' [A study on Annie Baird's sinsosul], *Hankuk Munhak Yirongwa Bipyong*, Vol.63, 139-159.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Annie Baird, *Two Short Stories: Ko Young Gyu Jeon and Bubuui Mobonjeon*, 16.

when we look at the specific objectives stated for the education of females in the educational institutes founded by the missionaries, such as Ewha Hak-Dang, which aimed to prepare their pupils to become Christian homemakers, mothers and wives, exercising influence over husband and children and evangelizing the home.²⁴

Ewha Hak-Dang was the first Christian modern education institution for girls and women in Korea. Founded by the American missionary Mary. F. Scranton, its stated objectives were ‘to develop the school girls in such ways as to make them model *housewives* under the conditions in which they must pass their lives and to make them missionaries of the cross among their relatives and associates.’²⁵ L. C. Rothweiler, the second president of Ewha Hak-Dang, 1890-1892, reiterated these points when she wrote that the aim of the education provided there was to prepare the pupils to be ‘*helpmeets* in building up and maintaining true homes, to be teachers of day schools, *assistants* in our boarding schools, to be nurses or assistants in medical work.’²⁶ Rothweiler is very clear that ‘the domestic life is [Korean girls’] sphere and destiny’, and ‘Whatever else we may want our girls to do or be, it must all be secondary to this first calling.’²⁷ Indicating that one of the primary purposes for girls’ education is to fit them to be good wives and mothers, who can build and maintain happy harmonious Christian homes, Rothweiler goes on to stress that, ‘Whatever else we may or may not teach them we ought to fit them for this [domestic life]. They must learn to prepare food, cut, make and repair their clothing, keep themselves and their rooms neat.’²⁸

Ellasue Wagner, who was Principal at the Holston Institute in Songdo, also stresses the importance of domestic and industrial life in Korean girls’ education:

Next to that of spiritual development, Korea’s greatest need today is training in the arts of home making and industry.... the student must not only study her books diligently but learn to make her own clothes, mend, cook, and keep the house in order.²⁹

She further reports on how the institute teaches these domestic skills:

There is a woman in the kitchen to superintend the cooking, but our girls do all the housework. Ten of the older girls are ‘directors of housework’ and each has under her direction seven or eight other girls; the work is also divided into ten parts or divisions: 1) cooking, 2) dining room work, 3) chapel, 4) classrooms on east wing, 5) classrooms on west wing, 6) halls on the first floor, 7) halls on second floor, 8) halls on third floor, 9)

²⁴ See Helen Barrett Montgomery, *Western Women in Eastern Lands* (New York, 1910), 105-106.

²⁵ George W. Gilmore, *Korea from Its Capital: With a Chapter on Missions*, 300. (My italics.)

²⁶ L.C. Rothweiler, ‘What shall we teach in our girls’ schools?’ *The Korean Repository*, Vol.1. (March 1892), 89-93. (My italics.)

²⁷ *Ibid.* 90.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Ellasue Wagner’s report in the *Second Annual Report of the Woman’s Missionary Council of the Episcopal Methodist Church, South, for 1911-1912*, (Nashville, TN: Publishing house of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1912), 268-269.

gymnasium, 10) lamps. Every week the work is changed and the tasks revolve in regular order, so that in ten weeks each girl has been on each kind of work.³⁰

As for Lillias Underwood, although she did critique the typical gender division of missionary roles, with women as teachers and men having all the responsibility for preaching, she never minimized the role and influence of mothers and wives in the Christian home.³¹

As shown above, the female missionaries who worked in Korea in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, notwithstanding their critiques on the degradation of women in Confucian Choson and their opposition to women's bondage, seem not to have supported the idea of women's rights. Rather, they promoted an ideal of femininity that kept women firmly within the sphere of domesticity. That being so, what other possible factors might account for the emergence of strong independent figures among the Korean women converted to Christianity? To answer this question, it is worth looking closely at the wider context in Korea at that time, particularly the movement for national independence and enlightenment, which emphasized the ideas of enhanced status for women, and women's education and equality.

4.2. The Impact of the Korean National Reform and Enlightenment Movement on the Role of Women

The Korean national reform and independence movement was active at the same time as the early mission movement, in the late 19th and earliest 20th century. Although it was led by men, it attracted large-scale support among the Korean elite for a general restructuring of Korean society that would include a transformation of women's roles.

Seo Jae Pil,³² founder of *Doklip* [Independence] newspaper, argued that the backwardness of Korean womanhood was a result of traditional customs such as the seclusion of women and their lack of education, which deprived them of dignity and rights.³³ For example, in an

³⁰ *Ibid.* 269.

³¹ Lillias Underwood, 'The Need of Education for Poor Korean Girls', *The Korea Mission Field* (Nov.1911), 328-330, asserts that 'Nothing can compare with the importance of training the future mothers of the people, in knowledge of God.'

³² Seo Jaepil was involved in the Korean national reform movement around the late 19th and early 20th century. He received a medical degree from Johns Hopkins University before returning to Korea in 1895. See 'The Independence Club,' *The Korean Repository*, vol.5, (August 1898), 282.

³³ Kim Sookja, 'Doklip Shinmoone Natanan Yeosung Gaewhaui uiji,' ['The will for women enlightenment, reflected in the Independent News Paper'], *Hankuksa Yeongu*, 54(1986), 59-74.

editorial dated January 4 1898,³⁴ Seo wrote that, just like men, women have ‘*chongmyung*’, the capacity to think independently with intelligence, and they should have the same opportunity as men to receive education. This would also benefit men, as their wives would be better able to advise them, thus ensuring success in household matters, and a stronger nation. Seo emphasized in particular the importance of women’s education in relation to the wellbeing of Korea as a whole, saying that in western European countries women’s education and equal rights as human beings created by God had been achieved centuries earlier, and had brought progress and prosperity to the countries concerned.

Indeed, at the turn of the 20th century one of Korea’s most urgent tasks was that of women’s enlightenment and education. This is reflected in Korean journals and newspapers of that time, not least the first journal for native Korean women, *Yeojajinam*, which argued the case for the provision of education to women throughout Korean society:

If we acknowledge that women’s intelligence and talents are the same as the men, why do we need to educate only men, making our households and the country weak? Some people say, men’s education in our country has not yet achieved perfection, then why do we need to educate women? But this is an ignorant comment. If women do not have knowledge, it will eventually affect children and husband as well at home.³⁵

Hence it would appear that the call for women’s education and equality was closely related to ideas concerning how Korea could progress and become a modern, enlightened, nation. Thus it is not at all clear whether the elites involved in the national reform movements really supported women’s rights and equality with men. Rather, the emphasis on women’s education and equality seems based on the idea of woman’s role as teacher and advisor to children and husband within the domestic household, and not beyond it. Meanwhile, it would be the husbands and sons who would be acting in the public domain, contributing to the national prosperity and wellbeing.

We find the same ideas in the arguments of another national reformer, the Christian Yun Chi Ho,³⁶ who saw a role for women in building a modern nation-state, yet supported the concept of domestic womanhood:

Let us first remember that the Korean girls who are being educated in mission schools are to live and work in Korean homes, many of them in poor homes. So to educate them as to

³⁴ *Doklip News Paper*, January 4th, 1898, vol.3, issue 1, pp.1-2. Originally written in Korean; my translation.

³⁵ See *Yeojajinam* [Bulletin of Korean Woman Education Society, Published in Hansung], San Woon, ‘The needs of women’s education,’ Vol.1,1.(1908), 15-16.

³⁶ Yun Chiho was involved in the coup ‘*gapogaehyuk*.’ He received an education in Shanghai, China at the Anglo-Chinese Southern Methodist Mission School, and studied at Vanderbilt and Emory University in the United States. He returned to Korea in 1895.

make them unsuitable to a Korean home would be a great mistake. For instance, to prepare food and to make dresses have been the exclusive province of the Korean woman. The inability or unwillingness of a newly educated girl to take up these duties does more than any one thing to prejudice the Korean against female education. It is my firm belief that it is more useful for a Korean girl to learn to cook and sew well than to play on a piano, for the simple reason that she will have far more occasions to cook and sew than to play on a piano in a Korean home. By all means emphasize domestic science in the curriculum more than any other kind of science. Teach abacus more thoroughly than algebra. Cultivate the taste (passion!) for flowers and pictures, rather than waste time in dabbling in astronomy and botany.³⁷

Such views, supporting education for women while drawing a firm boundary between what is 'useful' for women to learn and what is not, might have helped to enhance women's status to a certain degree, but certainly did very little towards the cause of women's rights and equality with men. Moreover, Yun's Christian background shows the closeness between the early Confucian oriented Korean enlightenment and the Christian reformers, both of which encouraged a domestic centred view of an educated woman.

The early 20th century was a period of political turmoil in Korea. During this time, the ideas of the reformer elites regarding women's education were reflected in the *Shin*³⁸ novels, written mainly by educated men involved in or sympathetic to the struggle for Korean national enlightenment. For example, Yi Injik, author of *Hyeluinoo* ('Tears of Blood'), had won a government scholarship to study at the Tokyo School of Politics in Japan. In 1906 he became editor of the newspaper *Mansebo*, and published *Hyeluinoo* in the same year. In 1907 he published the first issue of *Daehan Shinmoon*, taking office as president of the newspaper company.³⁹ Yi Haejo, the author of *Jayoojong* ('The Bell of Freedom', 1910), was born into a noble family and passed the government exam to become a *Jinsa*.⁴⁰ With his interests in new knowledge and science, he founded Cheungsanjaeil school.⁴¹ Choi Chanshik, the author of *Chuweolsaek* ('The colour of the Autumn Moon', 1912), studied history, geography, mathematics, and English at Shiheoung school and also at Hanseoung joonghakgyo.

The female characters in the *Shin* novels are mainly from the middle or higher classes, and reflect the needs and desires of women seeking freedom.⁴² This is in stark contrast to the

³⁷ See T.H. Yun, (Yun Chiho), 'The Sort of Education Korean Girls Need,' *The Missionary Voice*, Vol. 8 (Nashville, TN: Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, April, 1918), 114-115.

³⁸ *Shin* (新) means 'new', or 'modernized'.

³⁹ *Korean Literature Masterpiece Dictionary*, Yim Hyunyoung and Kim Jaeyong (eds.), (Seoul: 1991), 15.

⁴⁰ A *Jinsa* was someone who had passed a preliminary government exam and thus qualified for appointment as a low level government officer or to enter the Sunggyungwan, the highest educational institution in Korea.

⁴¹ Yi Yongnam, *Yi Haejo and his work's world* (Seoul, 1986), 96, 99.

⁴² Yi Haejo maintained that his writing was motivated by the desire to enlighten and liberate the noble class women in Choson, while awakening the consciousness of the general population, and much of the subject

female missionary narratives, which feature mainly poorer or lower class characters, and depict their daily struggle to survive. The women in the Shin novels also tend to be valued as people in their own right; for example Jungim in Choi Chanshik's *Chuweolsaek* is an only child, born late in her parents' marriage, and much loved by them. Often, in the absence of male children, the daughters in the novels are the only hope to inherit and continue the family line. This must have been ground breaking in the context of Confucian Choson, given the traditional preference for sons and disdain for daughters. These Korean women are also often portrayed as highly intelligent and well educated; for example Oak Ryeoun in *Hyeluinoo* has studied in Japan and America, while Jungim in *Chuweolsaek* has a brilliant mind, and is an honours graduate of Tokyo women's university.

The Shin novels are concerned with the theme of enlightenment, and treat topics such as women's education, remarriage and freedom, the abolition of arranged marriage, and national independence. Many of these topics feature in the female missionaries' narratives, but the Shin authors delve more deeply into the question of a woman's 'realm' of activity, relating this to the cause of national progress. For example, in *Jayoojong* Yi Hae Jo stresses the urgent need for women's education in order to achieve national enlightenment and modernization. It tells of four upper class women, Shin Seol Heon, Lee Mae Kyung, Hong Gook Lan, and Kang Geum Eoun, who meet at Lee's house in 1908, according to the Lunar Calendar, on the occasion of Lee's birthday. Their conversation reflects many modern concerns, especially in terms of support for women's rights and equality with men, and the novel promotes the idea that the old custom of women's subordination to men should be abolished. With regard to women's education, we read that:

Because not many women have received education in our country, our politics has been ~~vulnerable to corruption~~, and our nation has been going through much turmoil. We women have been treated like slaves to men because of the poor education for women. Therefore, women's education is the most urgent matter for women and our society in Korea.⁴³

Upon closer examination, however, the model of womanhood presented by the Shin authors is found to be limited, resonating with the views of the reformers Yun and Seo as far as women's rights and equality with men are concerned. In *Jayoojong*, for example, although the four women support the enlightenment and education of women, their rationale for this

matter in the novels was based on real events. See Yi Haejo, *Whauiheol* [the blood of the flower], Hankuk Shinsoseol Junjip[Korea Shinsoseol Collection], Kim Gwangyong, Song Minho, and Paik Sunjae (eds.), vol.2 (Seoul, 1968): 'the first purpose of literature (the novel) is to enhance morality and to mend society,' 412.

⁴³ Yi Hae Jo, *Jayoojong*, *Shinsoseol bunansoseol 1*, (Seoul, Asiamoonwhasa, 1978), 4. On women's education in relation to the betterment of Korea, see also Kim Heeja, 'Gyewhagi soseolgwa yeosung gyoyookron' [Shin Novels and Women's Education], Gungook University Graduate School Collection of Papers, vol.27, (1988), 53-72.

appears to be that women will then be better able to educate their children at home, rather than any idea that women themselves deserve equal opportunities to education and growth. The character of Jungim, in *Chuweolsaek*, might represent an exception. When her parents seek a new bridegroom, after the disappearance of an earlier intended husband-to-be, Jungim goes against her parents' wishes and leaves home for Tokyo. In doing so she avoids a forced marriage, and also takes the opportunity to gain a higher education. This behaviour is contrary to what would usually be expected of a Korean young woman, who ought to show obedience to her parents, and especially the father, the patriarchal head of the family. Then, independently and with no recourse to traditional authority figures, Jungim goes in search of Youngchang, the boy to whom she was betrothed as a child. Here, however, we see that despite the extraordinary nature of Jungim's course of action, and the undoubted independence of her spirit, she still wishes to enter into a marriage arranged for her in childhood, one that depended originally upon her father's decision,⁴⁴ not her own.

Hyeluinoo by Yi In Jick places great emphasis on the issues of women's education, freedom and equality with men. It tells the life story of Oak Ryeoun, who in 1894 at the height of the China-Japan war (1894) is separated from her parents and wounded; the seven-year-old is rescued by a Japanese army medical doctor and sent to his wife in Japan for further care. Oak attends school in Japan, and then goes to study in the United States with Gu Wan Seo, a young Korean man she has met in Japan. The two young people share a common aim of going to study abroad in order that they might contribute to Korea's betterment in the future. Here it is notable that, although Oak is a member of the elite, a refined and intelligent woman educated in Japan and in the West, she appears to have rather in common with the traditional model of womanhood. For example, we see it on her dependence on males, such as Gu and the Japanese doctor who rescues her. When the doctor sends Oak to his wife, telling her, 'if you remain in my house with my wife, then, I will put you to school for study. If you study well, then, I will see here to look for your parents,'⁴⁵ she does not question on his saying and complies. This attitude on dependence is seen again when she hears that the doctor has been killed and his wife is to remarry; alone, and not knowing where to go, she attempts suicide. Later, having met Gu on a train, she responds to his suggestion 'Let us go to the United States for study together. If I hear news of your parents, then, I will let you go

⁴⁴ See Choi Chanshik, *Chuweolsaek*, Hankuk Shinsoseol Junjip [Korea Shinsoseol Collection], Kim Gwangyong, Song Minho, and Paik Sunjae (eds.), vol. 4, (Seoul, 1968), 18-19, 24-25.

⁴⁵ See Yi In Jick, *Hyeluinoo*, Hankuk Shinsoseol Junjip [Korea Shinsoseol Collection], Kim Gwangyong, Song Minho, and Paik Sunjae (eds.), vol. 1 (Seoul, 1968), 27.

back to Korea,⁴⁶ with unquestioning assent, for which ‘obedience’ might be a more accurate term. Indeed, in her decision to study in the United States in order that she might contribute to Korea’s betterment Oak seems to be following Gu’s will, rather than her own. Such lack of any initiative to control her own destiny, seems to fit closely with traditional Korean ideas of womanhood.

In fact, the image of womanhood presented by the male elite authors of the *Shin* novels can be seen as transitional, neither traditional nor quite fully modern. The novels champion certain rights for women, such as equal access to education, yet their female characters have not broken free of the values and ideals of Korean traditional domestic womanhood. The women in the novels are educated and intelligent, but they are not yet fully independent, nor do they seem to seek autonomy in a world outside the traditional domestic realm.

Indeed, most of the leaders working for Korean national reform and enlightenment were men, and in this sense the movement could be seen as a mirror of the missionary endeavour, where again, a male leadership promoted change for women. In the case of the national reformers, their efforts certainly contributed to improvements in women’s status. However, their ideas regarding women’s rights were limited, and based to some degree on traditional assumptions.

4.3. Economic Impacts on the Status of Confucian Women

If the raising of women’s status cannot be attributed entirely either to the women missionaries or to the national reform and independence movement, what other factors can be identified as having contributed to it? This thesis maintains that the answer must lie in some circumstance or quality already existing among women in Korea. Specifically, the economic abilities and activities of Choson Confucian women, exercised in their management of household finances and even in the running of small businesses, appear to have contributed to their ability to adapt easily to an expanded role in social life, such as through leadership in evangelical work.

The role of women in managing the household finances is reflected in some of the missionary narratives. For example, in Wagner’s ‘Mittome’ the family of the *yangban* Mr Ye Kung Su faces indigence because he cannot engage in ‘labour’ seen as unfitting to his class.⁴⁷ His wife is forced to deal with the poverty that comes through adhering to the

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* 41.

⁴⁷ Mr Ye says, ‘I am really not to blame, for what gentleman is supposed to know the sordid details of business?’ (Wagner, ‘Mittome’ in *Kim Su Bang and Other Stories of Korea*, 54).

Confucian class code by managing the household budget and, finally, by selling household property. Similarly, in Perry's *The Man in Grey*, the mother of Mr Min must maintain the dignity of the *yangban* family by meeting the household expenses, even if that means borrowing. We learn that 'Mrs Min the elder, upon whom rested the responsibility of the housekeeping, had been obliged to borrow from a distant cousin the cash with which to purchase the rice for their supper.'⁴⁸ In Baird's 'Ko Young Gyu Jeon', the deserted wife Bobae manages the household entirely alone, and even sells household property in order to raise the money for Ko's bail.⁴⁹ She does this alone, without help or guidance from any male relative.

Women's contribution to the household economy was considered so significant that it was recognized in the statute called *sambulgeo* (三不去), which stated the three grounds upon which a woman could challenge her husband's demand for a divorce. One of these was that the woman had exercised good financial management, thus increasing the material wealth of the household (前貧賤後富貴不去).^{50, 51}

In addition to managing household budgets, many Choson Korean Confucian women also contributed to their family income. They did so chiefly through weaving, as suggested by the saying 男耕女織⁵², meaning 'men cultivating the field, women weaving'. In some circumstances, women might even participate in farming, as in the case of the wife of the blind Ko Pansoo, in Baird's *Daybreak in Korea*:⁵³

Across the road, up to her knees and elbows in the water of the rice field was a queer-looking hoop made up of dirty white muslin and bare brown skin. [Ko Pansoo] heard the chug, chug of her feet as she moved about in the mud, and either by that token or by some other he knew it was his wife.⁵⁴

⁴⁸ Perry, *The Man in Grey*, 10.

⁴⁹ See 'Ko Young Gyu Jeon' in Baird, *Two Short Stories*, 14-15.

⁵⁰ The two other grounds were that the woman had nowhere to go (有所取無所歸不去), or if she had joined her husband in the three-year mourning for his parents (與共更三年喪不去).

⁵¹ The involvement of Choson women in economic matters can also be seen in *Byeongja ilgi*. The author, Cho Ssi, was the fourth daughter of a governor, married to a high-ranking officer who was a brother-in-law of the royal family. When the war between Choson and China broke out in Dec. 1636, her husband was away for around a year and a half, serving the king. During that time the lady Cho managed the household, including financial matters, entirely on her own. See Cho Ssi [Nampyung Cho Ssi 南平曹氏 1574-1645], *Byeongja ilgi* 丙子日記, trans. and interpret. by Chun Hyung Dai and Park Kyung Shin (Seoul, 1991), 133. See also Kim Shin Yeon, 'Choson's Cho Ssi's life phase in *Byeongja ilgi*', *Journal of Hanyang Women's Junior College*, (Seoul, 1997), vol.20, 117-134.

⁵² Like other traditional agricultural societies, in general in Choson there was a division of labour along gender lines. However, sometimes women would be engaged in cultivating the fields, owing to circumstances such as severe poverty, or the absence or incapability of men. (See *Daybreak in Korea*, 49, where Kesiki, wife of the blind Ko Pansoo, works in the rice field.)

⁵³ See Baird, *Daybreak in Korea*, 43

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* 49.

However, for most women in Choson, their chief contribution to the household income would be in weaving silk and cotton cloth, which they did at home. In *Daybreak in Korea* we read how ‘all the women who were not otherwise engaged were busy making up the supply of thread for the year’s sewing... As they sat and talked together, drawing out the cotton and rubbing it into long strands with their fingers, they might well have been taken for the Korean Fates.’⁵⁵

The economic value of women’s weaving was relatively high, and sometimes higher than that of men’s agricultural labour. For example, a women would spend around ten days weaving one piece of cotton cloth.⁵⁶ Hence, to make 10 pieces would take 100 days, and 30 pieces, almost one year. In 1887, the average production of cotton cloth per household ranged from minimum two pieces to maximum 40 pieces per year.⁵⁷ Most households would need fewer than ten pieces for their own use, and the surplus would be sold, traded as like currencies.⁵⁸ Since one piece of cotton cloth was worth almost the same as four *du* of rice (1 *du* was equal to 18.039 L),⁵⁹ this represented a significant contribution to the household income.⁶⁰

Indeed, throughout the history of Confucian Choson, women enjoyed relatively high status in terms of their economic involvement in the household.⁶¹ The importance of their economic activity is recognized in archive documents such as the following.⁶²

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* 69.

⁵⁶ Kajomura Subu 梶村秀楠 ‘The circulation and the structure of production of the industry of the cotton cloths around the end of Choson,’ *Hangukgeundaisa Yeongu* [The research on the Korean Modern Economic History], (Seoul, 1983), 171.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* 140.

⁵⁸ See Song Jaisun, ‘16th century cotton fabric’s function as currency,’ *ByunTaiSeopBakSa Hoigapginyeom Sahaknonchong* [Dr.Byun Taiseop’s 60th Birthday Commemoration Historical Studies Collection of Treatises.], (Seoul, 1985), 391.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* 415.

⁶⁰ Mrs. Mok, the daughter of yangban Yi Do Won(1663-1704), married to Mr.Mok, was known to to be skilled in silkworm farming and producing silk fabric, and to have accumulated a large property more than 10,000 nyang. (see Nam Mi Hye, *Chosonsidai Yangjameop yeongu* [The research on Silkworm farming in Choson], (Seoul, 2009), 272-273). Andong Kim Ssi, a noble woman married to Yi Moongun (1495-1567), was also known to be skilled in silkworm farming and producing silk fabric, which brought in a large share of the household income. Kim Ssi produced a minimum of 60 du (1du (斗) = 1mal, 18m volume) of silk fabric annually, weaving silk of about 15 pil (1 pil = 22m). 15 pil of silk was equal in value to 289.5 pil of cotton, the equivalent of 14.5 bags of rice (1bag =10du) produced from the rice field (畓), about 4-6 durak (斗落). See Yi Jungsu, ‘Actual condition of the currency circulation from the middle of the 16th century through the early 18th century,’ *Chosunsidai Sahakbo*, vol.32, (Seoul, 2005), 123-125.

⁶¹ That is, in comparison with the involvement of western women in household financial matters, according to the Victorian ideal. In the newly industrialized societies in the West, most economic production and its labour was transferred to the public sphere, the realm claimed by men. Western women were largely financially dependent upon men. In contrast, Choson women appear to have been relatively economically active and independent.

⁶² See Choi Seunghye, *Gomunseo Yeongu*, Seoul University no. 129348 quote, 398. (Requoted from Han Hyojung, (A)study of economic activities by women in the yangban class around the seventeenth century [17

A certificate to be sent to Park Suil in Feb. 27, 1755

This document is to certify that Cho Ssi, on behalf of her household, discussed making an exchange of her [household] land of 5 majigi 6 jum 2 sok, acquired in her newly wedded days, with the other land of 3durakji 2 jum 7 sok, owned by Parksuil; for the former land was far from Cho Ssi's place [The house of Yim and Cho Ssi] so it was difficult to cultivate and plough it. Whereas the latter land owned by Park is located near her house, so they discussed making an exchange of their lands.

According to this document, Cho Ssi, the wife of Yim, was involved in the exchange of land with Park Suil. She is named as the owner of the land, and appears to take responsibility for business negotiations and arrangements concerning that part of the property.

Furthermore, although usually commercial activities would be carried out by men, some women, especially in the common class, would be engaged in business, such as peddling at the local market or around the village.⁶³ The main items sold were home grown or homemade produce, and salt.⁶⁴ Women of the common class are also known to have run inns, providing room and board for travelling businessmen. Kim Mandeuk (1739-1812), known as one of the most successful Choson businesswomen in Cheju island, ran an inn near the port, where she worked as a broker between buyers and sellers. She was able to earn a considerable income, selling cloth, jewellery and cosmetics to the island women, and Cheju island specialties, such as deer antlers and tangerines, to people on the mainland.⁶⁵

In his report on the roles and activities of Korean women in the late Choson, Homer B. Hulbert (1863-1949), an American missionary of the Methodist Church, confirms that it was not only the humble class women in Choson who contributed to their families' income. Noble and high class women would undertake embroidery or other sewing work or the manufacture of silk, or would act as tutors to the daughters of their more fortunate sisters, teaching the Chinese characters and literature, housekeeping, needle work, and embroidery. Middle class women would work as wet-nurses, or innkeepers.⁶⁶

世紀前後 兩班家 婦人の 經濟活動 研究], Ph.D.Thesis, Sungshin Yeoja University, (Seoul, 2007), 63,64:
乾隆二十年乙亥二月二十七日朴守一前明文

右明文事段內上典趙氏在翁正五年丁未十二月初三日新婚時別得黃子沓五斗落只六卜二束庫伏在於蓮川縣內東五里相距稍速耕作不便是遺右人荒子沓三斗落只二卜七束庫段在於上典家近處故彼此取其便近相議相換...

⁶³ See the painting by Kim Hongdo titled *Ginoseryungyedo* (기노세런계도), c.a. 1804. A private collection. The painting shows women peddling their wares on a corner while a public village party is opened.

⁶⁴ See Kim Sunghee, 'Women's Indoor and Outdoor Everyday Life of the Late Choson Period as Expressed in Paintings' *Daihan Gajeong Hakhoiji* [The Paper of the Korean Home Economics Association], 42:7 (2004), 47.

⁶⁵ See *Jeongjo Sillok* [The annals of the king of Jeongjo], vol.45, p.47. AD.1796.11.25. Kim was able to accumulate a large fortune and made a donation of 450 bags of rice to the Choson government to alleviate famine in Cheju island. This gift was valued highly and was recorded formally in the Annals of King Jeongjo.

⁶⁶ See Homer B. Hulbert, *The Passing of Korea* (New York: 1906), 354-361.

In Perry's *Uncle Mac the Missionary*, Mrs Whang is a successful rice merchant. It is learned that after the death of her husband, she 'had kept on his business and brought up her family in a most creditable manner.'⁶⁷ In Wagner's *Kumokie*, Whang Ssi, the go-between, also appears to have enjoyed good economic standing, as she would receive from four to eight dollars for each deal. Wagner underlines her economic status when she tells us that 'The self-complacent air with which she bore herself, the nice little house she had built, the position of prominence given her in that part of the country - all bore eloquent testimony to the prodigious success which attended her efforts.'⁶⁸

This activity in economic affairs, from managing the family budget to contributing to the family income with work done inside or outside the home, and even engagement in commerce, seems to have been another factor that, together with their evangelical work, contributed to expanding women's horizons and lifting their social standing.

We can see how these factors combined in the case of one Korean woman, Paik Helen, a widow with two children. Seeking ways to maximize her family income she travelled to Seoul, where she happened to see Mrs Scranton, a female missionary in the Episcopal Methodist Church, North, teaching children the Bible. Paik listened to the teaching with great attention and eagerness, and Mrs Scranton gave her a Bible; as a result of this encounter, Paik became a believer. After training for three years, in 1893 Paik was appointed to Inchoen, Jemulpo region.⁶⁹ As she did her evangelical work as a Bible woman, calling door to door, selling Bibles and tracts to the Choson women, reading the scriptures, praying for the sick and even teaching some women how to read, she would carry small items for sale, as if running a small business. In this way she was able to combine her evangelical work with the practical matter of ensuring an income for her family. Although a few Bible women, assistants to the woman missionaries, were paid a small wage, of 2-3.50 dollars a month,⁷⁰ most did not receive any payment for their work, and Paik seems to have been among these. Nevertheless, it seems that the work was

⁶⁷ Perry, *Uncle Mac the Missionary*, 112.

⁶⁸ Wagner, *Kumokie, a Bride of Korea*, (Nashville, TN: Publishing House of the M.E. Church, South, 1922), 24.

⁶⁹ See Jang Byungkuk, *Hankuk Gamrigyo Yeosungsa* [History of Methodist Women in Korea] (Seoul, 1979), 194-198.

⁷⁰ The Korean male assistant to the missionary was paid 4-5 dollars a month, 48-60 dollars per year, and the female Bible woman, assistant to the woman missionary, was paid about half what the male assistant received. See 'Native Bible Women' *The Korea Mission Field*, Vol.6. (May 1910), 119-121.; see also Lillias Underwood, *Fifteen Years among the Topknots*, 131.

successful, and the team of three persons (women mission in the Incheon Jemulpo region) grew to become much larger.⁷¹

One of the important tasks for the Korean Bible women was to walk up to 40km per day into the deep inlands where the missionaries could not reach, and sell Bibles to the local people there. As a result of their evangelical work, mission stations were opened or expanded, even in the most remote areas. Sadie Kim, who became a Bible woman in 1899, assisted Mrs Noble with her evangelical work, visiting house to house, selling Bibles and tracts and preaching the Gospel. Mattie Noble records her testimony that: 'I have been privileged to preach the Gospel to many and thousands have believed through my message, and of those who continued in the faith over seven hundred are still known personally by me.'⁷² Through her evangelical work many Koreans became Christians, among them sorcerers and sorceresses, and dancing girls.

In the case of Dorcas, a Korean Bible woman from Puk Chong in the northern region of Korea, we can see how her previous career as a liquor-seller linked well with her evangelical work. She was recognized as 'a woman of force and brains', who 'had learned to read in order to help herself in business.' After her conversion to Christianity she gave up her job selling liquor, and took up peddling and trading as she carried out the work of evangelization as a Bible woman, visiting village by village, selling Gospels and preaching. During one year Dorcas sold '369 Gospels, one New Testament, and a number of tracts, catechisms, and hymn-books. Two thousand five hundred and forty women heard the Gospel from her.'⁷³

Thus the prominent role of Choson Confucian women in managing their household finances, and sometimes even running small businesses, appears to have influenced both their evangelical work and their social standing. To take this one step further, this leading role in economic activity may be traced back to their rights with regard to property.

4.3.1. Confucian Choson women and their right to property

The relatively high status of Choson women in matters of household economics may be linked to their rights with regard to property, which remained strong throughout Choson history. In contrast, at least until the late 19th century, married women in Japan or China could not own property, and any property they brought with them to their marriage

⁷¹ See Jang Byungkuk, *Hankuk Gamrigyo Yeosungsa* [History of Methodist Women in Korea], 194-198.

⁷² *Victorious lives of early Christians in Korea*, compiled by Mattie Wilcox Noble (Tokyo, 1933), 138.

⁷³ See Mrs. A.F. Robb, 'Our Bible Woman, Dorcas,' *The Korea Mission Field*, Vol.3, (Jan. 1907), 6-7.

henceforth belonged to their husband. For example, if a bride was the daughter of a rich farmer, and brought considerable farms and rice-fields to the marriage, all of that property would be considered as her husband's, and it was not possible to transfer it to others.⁷⁴ In Japan, this situation continued until the introduction of reforms in 1868, during the age of Maji Yusin (明治維新).⁷⁵ Even if the married woman were to engage in paid work, any income earned through that work would not belong to her.

The situation in China was similar to that in Japan. Furthermore, in Chinese traditional societies, such as during the Ming dynasty (1368-1644), a woman's right to inherit property was recognized only if there was no male heir.⁷⁶ When the husband died, even the property brought to the marriage by the wife did not revert to her, but was inherited by the couple's children; if there were no children, then the women may have the lot of their husband, but in fact what she gained was the right of management, not rights to the property itself. According to the code of the Qing dynasty (1644-1911), 'after the death of their husband, and if they remarried, then, not only the property of the husband, but also the original bottom drawer [brought by the wife to the marriage] were to be controlled by the family of the deceased husband.'⁷⁷ This situation regarding the inferior status of women was to undergo reform around 1840, the time of the opium war with Britain.

Unlike its neighbours China and Japan, Choson did allow women to own, manage and inherit property. Hence women in Choson were able to own their own property and to dispose of it according to their own will, independently and without the involvement of a husband. There still exist certain archives that reveal the elevated standing of Choson women with regard to such property rights. Such cases are documented in archives recently rediscovered in Jungangilbo.⁷⁸ For example, in 1528, a widow named Oh Ssi, wife of the late Yi Jong Eop, exercised her power of control over the household property after the death of her eldest grandson, by distributing the farmland and fields among descendants and servants. Also the records of Kwangsan Kim Ssi in Choson document female authority in 21 cases out of 47,⁷⁹ with most of these related to widows.⁸⁰

⁷⁴ Inoue Kiyoshi 井上清, *Ilbon yeosungsa* [Japanese women's history], vol.1., trans. by Sung Haejun and Gam Younghee, (Seoul, 2004), 179.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.* 167.

⁷⁶ See 大明會典 [The Ming Code]. Reprint of 1587 ed., 1963. vol.19, 180 卷.

⁷⁷ 大清律例, 戶律 8, requoted from Ryu Yeonwha, 'Jungkuk Yeosungui beobjeok jiwi' [The legal status of Chinese women], Chungbuk University, Ph.D. 2008, p.31.

⁷⁸ See *Jungang* Newspaper, 15 March 1990, 11.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

This is stated clearly in *Seongjongsillok*.⁸¹

Husband/wife is one household going through all the matters together, the property of wife is the property of husband, and the property of husband is the property of wife. If one party predeceased the other, but the surviving party doesn't have the right to deal with their property, what good is it? Isn't it without impropriety, if the surviving party is poor and desperately in need of disposing of the property of the household, then, he/she does it? According to this statement, regardless of gender, when one spouse passed away, the surviving party would assume the right of delegation over the household property, distributing it among the descendants. It reveals the equality of men and women in this regard, contrasting with the male-centred property rights in western Victorian societies. There were, however, some conditions upon this right, as shown in *Kyungguk Daijeon* 經國大典.⁸² According to a statute:

If the couple, the husband and the wife, did not have children, then, in the case of *noby* [slaves]⁸³ the surviving party may deal with it, yet s/he cannot transfer *noby* over to a family other than the original owner⁸⁴.

There was much debate as to how this should be interpreted, especially in the case of a widow who did not have any other resources except *noby*. It was finally settled that in such circumstances, as long as the widow remained in the same family, and did not remarry into another, then she would have the right to dispose of *noby* to ensure her economic survival.⁸⁵ The strong property rights possessed by women were particularly well expressed in the *Janyeo Gyunbun Sangsokje* (子女均分相續制) in the early period of Choson,⁸⁶ which means, the children of a marriage were to be allowed to inherit their parents' property in equal proportions, regardless of gender and without discrimination.⁸⁷

⁸⁰ Widows were more likely to be at the head of common class households than those of the noble classes. See Hulbert, *The Passing of Korea*, 354. See also *Jungang Newspaper*, 15 March 1990, 11.

⁸¹ See *Seongjong Sillok* [The annals of the king of Seongjong], the year of 21 the month of 6 the day of 8 jo. Yichuk(己丑) A.D.1490. vol. 241, p.8.

⁸² The book of the law in Choson, originally completed in 1485.

⁸³ *Noby* represented a major part of household property in *yangban* class families.

⁸⁴ “無子女夫妻奴婢雖無傳係生存者區處本族外不得與也.” (see *Kyungguk Daijeon* 經國大典 (Kyeongsung: Choson Chongdokbu Jungchuwon, 1934), 499.

⁸⁵ See *Seongjong Sillok* [The annals of the king of Seongjong], the year of 21 the month of 6 the day of 9 jo. KyungIn(庚寅), vol.241, p.8b, 9.

⁸⁶ See *Kyeongguk Daijeon* 經國大典, (Kyungsung: Choson chongdokbu Jungchuwon, 1934), Hyungjun 刑典, Sachunjo 私賤條, 491-501.

⁸⁷ While there was no 'gender' discrimination, there was discrimination as to 'class.' Children born of a second wife of the common class received one seventh of the proportion inherited by children of the first wife, and those born of a second wife of the lower class, one tenth of the proportion of the children of the first wife. See *Kyungguk Daijeon* 經國大典 (The book of law in Choson, completed in 1485), Hyungjun 刑典, Sachunjo 私賤條, 491-501.

The table below demonstrates an example of *Janyeo Gyunbun Sangsokje* as carried out in practice in the family of ‘yangban’ Gwon Dongbo, in 16th century Choson.⁸⁸ As can be seen, even after marriage women received an inheritance equal to that of their brothers, which supported their economic power.⁸⁹

TABLE 1
AN EXAMPLE OF JA NEYEO GYUN BUN SANG SOK JE IN
THE FAMILY OF ‘YANGBAN’ GWON DONGBO⁹⁰

	male noby	female noby	Field	Farm
Oldest son, Dongbo	41	44	203	368
Second daughter, married to Hon Insu	41	45	332	292
Third son, Dongmi	42	43	328	250

As can be seen from the table⁹¹, the three offspring inherited very similar proportions of the family property. The *noby* are evenly distributed among the three, and while the size and number of farm lands and fields may look different, this could be explained by different quality of land, or distance from the main homestead. Hence this example confirms the practice of *Janyeo Gyunbun Sangsokje* that was prevalent until the middle of the 17th century.

Indeed, under the system of *Janyeo Gyunbun Sangsokje*, the right of daughters to inherit was not to be deprived in any circumstances.⁹² This principle was strongly adhered to,

⁸⁸ See Miyajimahirosi (宮嶋博史), *Yangban*[兩班: 李朝社会の特権階層], (中央公論社:1995-8), trans. Ro Young Gu, (Seoul, 2014), 209-210.

⁸⁹ From the middle or the latter part of the 17th century, the practice of the principle *Janyeo Gyunbun Sang sok je* (子女均分相續制) was gradually changed, giving special preferences to male children, especially the eldest.

⁹⁰ *My abridgement from an original table.*

⁹¹ See Miyajimahirosi (宮嶋博史), *Yangban*, 209-210.

⁹² See *MeongjongSillok* [The annals of the king of meongjong], vol.13. p.11b. The year of two, the month of four, the day of 16 jo. Kyungjinjo.

especially in the early period of Choson and especially with regard to *yangban* women.⁹³ If any child were to take all the inheritance, denying his or her siblings, then the other children could have recourse to the law to claim their own right of inheritance,⁹⁴ and the child who had wrongly appropriated the property would be subject to punishment.

The archives provide evidence that these principles were taken extremely seriously. For example, an advisor *saganwon*⁹⁵ consulted King Seonjo as to the proper course of action in the case of a man, the head of the village *heopgok*, who had monopolized all the property inheritance; he had not shared anything with the children of his dead sister, and had even taken the *noby* owned by that sister. Affirming that he was not an honourable man, the advisor asked the King to remove him from office, and the King did so.⁹⁶

This principle of equal inheritance regardless of gender provided the rationale whereby the economic rights of married women were respected in Choson Confucian society.⁹⁷ This principle remained firm until around the 18th century, and even after that, when the situation began to change owing to the consolidation of the Confucian patriarchal system, women did not lose all rights. For example, in or around the year 1856, Ryu Ssi drew up a will asking her parents-in-law to help with the distribution of her property and *noby* for her daughter.⁹⁸ Here we see Ryu Ssi, a married woman of the noble class, acting on her 'own' authority in matters of household property, even in the period of the late Choson.⁹⁹

The rights of Choson women to own and manage property are particularly notable when we consider the low economic status of women in the Anglo-American world in the late 18th and early 19th century, the years when the Victorian ideal was in its embryonic stage. Upon marriage, a woman's property passed to the ownership and control of her husband;

⁹³ See Kim Duheon, *Hankuk Gajokjedo Yeongu* [Korea Family System Research], (Seoul: Seoul National University Publishing House, 1968); Choi Jaisuk, *Hankuk Gajokjedosa Yeongu* [Korea Family System History Research], (Seoul, 1983); Mun Sookja, *Chosonsidai Jesan Sangsokgwa Gajok*, [Property Inheritance and Family in Choson] (Seoul, 2004) .

⁹⁴ See *Kyungguk Daijeon* 經國大典 (Kyungsung: Choson chongdokbu Jungchuwon, 1934), 189-190. See also Kim Euna, 'Choson jungi jaisan sangsok bubjaeseo Yeosungui jiwi' [The Status of Women in the Property Inheritance Law in the Early Choson], *Beobhak Yeongu* [The Research of the Law], vol.28, 2007, 208.

⁹⁵ Saganwon (司諫院) were charged with discussing matters with the king and advising him.

⁹⁶ See *Seonjo Sillok* [The annals of the king of seonjo], vol.14, p.4. The year of 13 the month of 5 the day of 24 jo, Imjin.

⁹⁷ 扶安金氏愚礪古文書 [*Buan Kim Ssi Ubun gomunseo*], compiled by Korea Jeongsin Munwha Yeonguso. No. 33 (Seongnam: 1983), 224.

⁹⁸ See Im Chi Gyun, 'Seoreong RyuSsi Buin Yuseo Yeongu' [Danneong Lady RusSsi's Will Research], *Gomunseo Yeongu*, vol.15, (June 1999), 53.

⁹⁹ See also Han Hyojung, *17 Segijunhoo Yangbanga Buinui Gyungje Whaldong Yeongu* [A study of economic activities by women in the Yangban class around the seventeenth century], Ph.D Thesis, Sungsin Women's University, Seoul, 2007, 35.

subsequently any income earned by the wife by any means would belong to her husband. Clearly, therefore, a woman could not purchase property in her own name.¹⁰⁰ The husband and wife were one person in law, and the person was the husband.

4.3.2. Choson Korean women's leading role in finance and their contribution to evangelical work

It appears that the role and rights of Choson Korean women in managing their household finances also contributed to their activity in the churches. Under the Nevius¹⁰¹ principle of self-support, which was adopted as official policy in the early mission in Korea, financial independence was critical. Lillias Underwood notes how well the early Korean church had fulfilled this principle of self-support, quoting from the general report of the Syen Chyun station for 1901-2:

Just as soon as the native church produces ordained pastors she must support them. For this the church is being prepared. In this station but one helper is entirely supported with foreign money, and four or five receive a part only; all the rest of our unordained preachers or helpers are entirely supported by the native church. With a single exception, all of the thirty-five country schools are entirely supported by the native groups where such schools are carried on.¹⁰²

Because Korean women often had responsibility for their household financial management, and sometimes even contributed income to the family budget, they had access to the economic resources of their individual households, and this provided an opportunity to contribute to the early church finances in many ways. For example, 'One way those poor families had of raising money to build their churches and schools, was to lay aside a handful of rice when the meagre quantity was measured out for a meal. When enough had been saved it was sold, and its proceeds put into the treasury for the work of Christ.'¹⁰³ This practice was known as '*seoung mi*' (sacred rice);¹⁰⁴ it was popular and widespread among Korean women believers, and although the amount of each individual offering was small, the combined effect was significant, and represented a major contribution to church finances.

¹⁰⁰ See Sarah Grimke, *Letters on the Equality of the Sexes, and the Condition of Woman* (Boston, 1838), 79.

¹⁰¹ In 1890 John L. Nevius of the Presbyterian Mission (North) in China was invited to visit the Korea mission, which went on to adopt the Nevius principles, such as self-support, self-propagation, and self-government for the 'new' way in Mission methods. See Clark, Charles Allen, *The Korean Church and the Nevius Methods* (New York, 1930), 24.

¹⁰² *Fifteen Years Among the Topknots*, 234.

¹⁰³ Jennie Fowler-Willing and George Heber Jones, *The Lure of Korea*, (Boston: Woman's Foreign Missionary Society, Methodist Episcopal Church, 1910), 35.

¹⁰⁴ W.G. Cram, 'North Ward Circuit, Songdo,' *Annual Report of Korea Mission of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1905*, 35. See also C.T. Collyer, 'Report of Songdo South Circuit,' *Annual Report of Korea Mission of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1905*, 36.

In Baird's *Daybreak in Korea* we see the strength of Korean women's devotion to their new faith, particularly in their dedication to the cause of building a village chapel:

...the women came forward with offerings and pledges. Old Sim Ssi stripped from her fingers two huge silver rings and handed them in, together with a beautiful knife-holder of wrought gold, and others followed her example until there was a little heap of gold, silver, and jade ornaments on the floor in front of the secretaries... One poor woman, the wife of a drunken, persecuting husband, slipped out and came back with a silk jacket left from her wedding trousseau and the one article of any value which she possessed.¹⁰⁵

This reflects to some degree the real sacrifices made by real women of the time, as reported in contemporary documents:

Lea Ssi lost her husband three years ago, and she lived as a widow with her three little children. When the church was to buy a building for use as a worshipping place and church school, Lea Ssi decided to sell her own house for 1000 won, saying 'I am now a widow, but after three years of mourning for my husband, I would like to be a Christian also, and I offer 300 won.' And she only received 700 won for her house.¹⁰⁶

In summary then, this chapter has shown how the leading role of Choson women in managing their household finances, and their involvement in other economic activity, such as running small businesses, seems to have linked with their evangelical work, expanding their social horizons and lifting their standing as women in Choson. This enhanced status was quite distinct from the traditional Confucian ideal of femininity, but was also at odds with the gender restraints imposed by Victorian ideas of 'domestic' womanhood. Certainly, both the women missionaries and the Korean male elites in the national reform and enlightenment movement contributed to this change in women's status, but crucially it was the Korean Confucian women themselves and their existing abilities and activities that allowed them to step out of their traditional role, expand their social world and contribute to leadership in evangelical works and activities.

¹⁰⁵ Baird, *Daybreak in Korea*, 109-110.

¹⁰⁶ *Grisdo Hoibo*, 30 March, 1911,2.

Chapter 5. The Women in the Narratives and Novels

In their portrayal of Confucian womanhood, the female missionary novels and narratives reveal two conflicting notions. On one hand the authors describe their Korean female characters, particularly in their lives before conversion, as weak, powerless victims. Examples include Pobai in *Daybreak in Korea*, Pokjumie in *Pokjumie*, young Mrs Min in *The Man in Grey*, and even Mittome in *Kim Su Bang and other stories of Korea*. However, on the other hand, there are also examples of strong, often non-domestic, women, such as the *mudang* Sim Ssi in *Daybreak in Korea* and the dancing girl in *Pokjumie*. That such strong female characters existed in Korea is confirmed in a report of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church USA, dated 1881, which states that however ‘degraded’ the ‘heathen’ women might have been, they ‘wielded great power.’¹ Women were considered to have spiritual supremacy over men and entire communities, and to be crucial to the conversion of men, especially their husbands and sons.²

It is interesting that the two strong women mentioned above, Sim Ssi and the dancing girl, are both portrayed in a negative light. The *mudang* Sim Ssi is not just independent and dominant; she is also shown to be evil, and seeking her own self-interest. The dancing girl in *Pokjumie*, who enters the house of Mr Chang as a concubine and behaves in an autonomous and ‘non-domestic’ manner, is depicted as immoral and treacherous. These characterizations and clear criticisms of non-domestic women seem to underline the authors’ commitment to the domestic ideal of womanhood.³

However, just as the strong women characters are criticized for refusing to conform to the missionaries’ proposed model of domesticity, so too before their conversion the weaker women characters are seen as passive, helpless beings. For all Confucian women, whether ‘strong’ or ‘weak’, the missionaries had four goals. They intended first to transform these women’s spiritual powers into what they called a ‘positive’ force through Christian conversion; second, to socially empower those they considered to be weak victims of

¹ Report of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church USA (1881), 12. Requoted from Barbara Welter, ‘She Hath Done What She Could: Protestant Women’s Missionary Careers in Nineteenth-Century America’, *American Quarterly*, Vol. 30, No. 5, Special Issue: Women and Religion (Winter, 1978), 624-638.

² Helen Barrett Montgomery, *Western Women in Eastern Lands: An Outline Study of Fifty Years of Women’s Work in Foreign Missions* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1910), 86-87.

³ See Marjorie King, ‘Exporting Femininity, Not Feminism: Nineteenth-Century U.S. Missionary Women’s Efforts to Emancipate Chinese Women,’ in *Women’s Work for Women: Missionaries and Social Change in Asia*, Leslie A. Flemming (ed.) (Boulder: 1989), 117-135.

Confucian society and patriarchy; for the strong ones, to domesticate their unregulated nature and spirit; and for both, to orientate them towards the realm of the domestic household.⁴

It is notable that, throughout the missionaries' main narratives, the focus is very firmly upon the Korean characters and their emancipation through conversion to the Christian faith, while we learn very little of the women missionaries themselves. This is perhaps not surprising, as one of the main purposes of the novels and other writings was to demonstrate the fruits of their mission activities and thus attract the support from home that was critical for that mission to continue. For example, we learn from Perry that: 'I was ... writing an account of "missionary labour" to the friends at home, whose pence and halfpence, with a sprinkling of the mighty silver, supported the ancestral columns of my palatial abode, and supplied me with sustenance for the body in the intervals of these labours.'⁵ The necessity to show the efficacy of their mission prompted these authors to write 'more stirring news of conversions and blessing', emphasizing to readers at home in America 'how the heathen come crying for the Gospel, and how it satisfies them to the saving of the soul'.⁶ Indeed, telling of the transformation brought about by conversion was perhaps the most critical and indispensable object of all the missionary literature.

Nevertheless, it is still surprising just how little reflection there is in the narratives upon the missionaries' own situation. This is all the more striking given that the women missionaries fought against the Confucian 'abasement' of women, while apparently not pausing to consider their own position as western women in Victorian Christian society.

For example, in Baird's *Daybreak in Korea*, the focus is almost exclusively upon Korean women or men. What little consideration there is of the women missionaries themselves is almost all within a part of Chapter Five, titled 'An Absorption of New Ideas', and even there the missionary concerned is 'unnamed'. Similarly, in Wagner's *Pokjumie*, out of a total of nineteen chapters there is only one, 'A Pending Battle Averted', in which we meet a missionary, seen in her encounter with Pokjumie.

Even when the narratives do portray missionaries, they tend to concentrate more upon action than self-reflection or personal development. For example, Perry's *The Man in Grey* and *Uncle Mac the Missionary* do include female missionary characters, yet the author is

⁴ Marjorie King, 'Exporting Femininity, Not Feminism,' 121. (King mentions only three goals, omitting the fourth given here.)

⁵ Jean Perry, *Chilgoopie the Glad: A Story of Korea and Her Children*, (London: 1906), 20.

⁶ *Ibid.* 33.

more concerned with painting pictures of the missionary family carrying out their mission work, and describing the impact on their Korean parishioners, than considering the effect of this work on the missionaries themselves. Perry's *Chilgoopie the Glad* also includes a female missionary, but as it focuses on a Korean 'male' character as the object of the mission work, it is not directly relevant to the Woman's Work for Woman. Underwood's *Fifteen Years Among the Topknots* and *Tommy Tompkins* portrays the author herself, yet it again deals mainly with her observation and experience on Korean women and men, and rarely touches upon how this impacted on her as a female missionary.

On the evidence presented in the narratives, it would appear that the female missionaries remained unaffected by the emancipation and transformation of Korean women, despite their own role in bringing these dramatic changes about. The missionaries as depicted by the western female authors do not change, and are shown always in the role of 'rescuer', while it seems that the Korean characters are always separate and 'other'. In other words, there is no mutuality in the relationship between western female missionary and Korean woman: the influence is all in one direction and the change is undergone by only one party, the Confucian woman, converted to Christianity.

Indeed, at least in the first years of mission, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, it seems that there was very little attention paid to the impact of the work on the western women missionaries themselves, or the implications for their own social standing. Rather, as can be seen from the lack of self-reflection in the missionary writings, the emancipation of Korean women appears to have led to an involuntary, and even unrecognized, reaction among the western women. The narratives, therefore, show all the ambiguities one would expect, with women missionaries fighting against the Confucian degradation of women, while remaining loyal to a western Victorian ideal of domestic womanhood. While their efforts are directed towards equal rights for Korean women, they seem to ignore the lack of equality in Christianized societies, and fail to consider the indigenous efforts for female emancipation, already existing among some women of the Korean gentry.

5.1. Gendered Missionary Contrasts: Missionary Wife as Victorian Lady

Many of the narratives include portraits of a 'missionary wife'. The image presented to us, especially in Baird's *Daybreak in Korea* and Perry's *The Man in Grey*, is one of a Victorian

lady,⁷ a woman who is affluent, yet stands in a weak position in the male-dominated Christian society. This portrait is particularly interesting when set against that of a strong Korean woman.

In Baird's *Daybreak in Korea*, the missionary and his wife are introduced as 'the foreigners,'⁸ seen from the perspective of *mudang* Sim Ssi and other local women. As the Korean women approach the missionaries' compound,⁹ they observe the couple walking together in the garden, a scene that implicitly demonstrates the more liberated lifestyle of the western woman, who is free to walk with her husband in public. In this first encounter, described within a chapter entitled 'An Absorption of New Ideas',¹⁰ Baird seems to contrast the 'new' and 'advanced' western womanhood with the Confucian traditional model of femininity.

Yet if Baird does intend to present a contrast in these terms, it is interesting that we see Sim Ssi, an unambiguously non-domestic character who does not conform to the allegedly 'normal' model of Confucian womanhood, active in the public realm. Moreover, Sim Ssi does not look favourably on this scene of apparent conjugal equality. Rather, as a leader of the Confucian women, she finds something distasteful and improper in it. She begins by ridiculing the missionary's wife, saying, 'She's no lady', indicating that because she is walking in an open area of the garden, albeit just in front of her house, with nothing over her face or head, she is no better than 'any other coolie woman' of the common class. Sim Ssi is scandalized that the missionary's wife, 'didn't care who looked at her', as if Sim Ssi were measuring the western woman against the standards of upper class manners in Choson. Encouraged by Sim Ssi's comment that the missionary's wife is 'no lady', another of the local women then claim that she 'can't be anything good' or her husband 'wouldn't be hanging around her like this as if he cared for her.'¹¹ The women observe as the missionary draws aside an overhanging branch from in front of his wife's face, yet rather than viewing this as a loving and considerate act carried out by a man who respects his wife as an equal companion, they see it as evidence that the wife is not an independent person, but relies upon her husband for care and help.¹²

⁷ The female missionaries in Wagner's *Pokjumie* and Perry's *Chilgoopie the Glad* are not identified as missionary wives, and are probably single missionary women.

⁸ A. Baird, *Daybreak in Korea* (1909), 58.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.* Chapter 5, 57-68.

¹¹ *Ibid.* 59.

¹² *Ibid.*

Thus, while Baird makes a sharp distinction between the western missionary wife and the Korean village women in terms of their homes and ways of life, contrasting the western 'advanced', 'better' living style with the traditional village ways, the native women do not seem to feel that the Victorian style, characterized by femininity and fragility, is at all preferable to their Confucian modes of living. On the other hand, the Korean women are impressed with the trappings of affluence they observe in the missionary's house, in the form of modern furniture and domestic appliances. When the missionary's wife shows a group of local women around the house, the visitors gaze about them, and one asks in wonder 'Are there any such abodes anywhere except those of mountain spirits?'¹³ The women are particularly astonished by the gold in the missionary wife's teeth, prompting one of them to marvel: 'I heard that they were rich, but I didn't suppose that they could afford to trim their teeth with gold.'¹⁴ Here, whether intentionally or not, Baird presents the western woman as a Victorian lady in an imperial context, who resides in a home filled with the comforts and conveniences of western civilization, distant from the houses and living space of the local people.

This image of the Victorian lady is repeated in Jean Perry's portrait of the missionary wife in *The Man in Grey*. Like her counterpart in *Daybreak in Korea*, Mrs Bright appears affluent: she hires a native cook, houseboy, and gate-keeper,¹⁵ and her baby daughter is received by the Koreans as a 'queen'.¹⁶ Furthermore, the missionary roles of Mr and Mrs Bright are clearly divided along Victorian gender lines: the male missionary does all the evangelical work, the preaching and touring the village, while his wife is shown mainly taking care of the home, engaged in nurturing and child-care. Thus the novel reflects the Victorian notion of woman as the weaker sex, living under the protection of her husband. Only occasionally is Mrs Bright shown as leading a small evangelical meeting at the church, and then only in the absence of her husband.¹⁷

Moreover, both Perry and Baird emphasize a type of femininity that relies upon a husband's leadership. In *The Man in Grey*, when Mrs Bright's baby falls ill while her husband is away

¹³ *Ibid.* 60.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* 59.

¹⁵ Annie Baird, *Inside Views of Mission Life* (Philadelphia, 1913), 67-68, tells how, when she and her husband first came to Korea, her house was provided with three servants. About ten years later there were four servants - a cook, a 'boy' who did general housework, a gateman to bring water, cut wood, cultivate the garden and take general care of the premises, and a boy to take care of the laundry. See also Jean Perry, *The Man in Grey*, 56-57, 77.

¹⁶ *Daybreak in Korea*, 30-31.

¹⁷ Jean Perry, *The Man in Grey*, 32.

on an evangelical mission trip,¹⁸ she sends not for a medical doctor, but for her husband. However, it is days before the missionary can be reached and, perhaps as a result of the delay in seeking treatment, the child dies. Of course, Mrs Bright is alone in a foreign land, and this may be one reason why she sends for her husband, rather than taking control of the emergency herself. Nevertheless, this image of Victorian ‘weak’ womanhood stands in contrast to the picture painted of Pobai, the Korean Confucian woman who faces a similar crisis in *Daybreak in Korea*. When Pobai’s baby Guihee is sick with smallpox, Pobai does not seek help from her husband, nor from relatives or parents-in-law. Rather, she acts independently, arranging a healing ceremony for her baby with the village healer *mudang* Sim Ssi.¹⁹

We meet similarly strong Korean women characters elsewhere in the missionary narratives, such as the ‘old Korean woman’ in *The Man in Grey*, ‘Grannie’ in *Uncle Mac the Missionary*, Martha in Wagner’s ‘Mittome’, and the young bride and Yu’s wife in Underwood’s *With Tommy Tompkins in Korea*. In the case of Yu’s wife, although her husband has been converted to Christianity, she does not follow him obediently into the new faith. Instead, she maintains the longstanding Confucian tradition, and is eventually persuaded to convert not by threats from her husband, but by her own conviction that the new faith is worthy of belief, a conviction based upon the positive changes she sees in Mr Yu.²⁰ This ability of a Korean wife to resist her husband’s will is glimpsed again in Perry’s report of a converted Korean girl who marries into a heathen family and eventually brings the whole family to Christianity. As Perry relates:

One of our Christian girls was married to a heathen man who lived in a village entirely ‘heathen’. At the wedding feast she was ordered to bow to the spirits. Upon refusing, she was asked the reason. She replied, ‘It is written, “Thou shalt have no other gods before me”; I can only bow down to God.’ So the husband had to bow alone. A few days later she refused to work. When asked the reason for this, she said it was Sunday, the day to worship the Lord. ... Now, not only are the villagers believers, but her husband is the preacher, and their home is the meeting place for the regular Christian services of that vicinity.²¹

Here, the converted Korean girl is shown as exercising strong leadership, transforming her whole household and community. Although she enters the house of her new husband as a stranger, she refuses to compromise on matters of faith, and this steadfastness results in her eventually leading the whole family to conversion.

¹⁸ See *ibid.* Chapter 8. ‘Holding the Fort,’ 70-79.

¹⁹ Annie Baird, *Daybreak in Korea*, 33.

²⁰ Lillias Underwood, *With Tommy Tompkins in Korea*, 167.

²¹ Jean Perry, *Twenty Years a Korea Missionary*, 59-60.

Returning now to the ‘feminine’ and fragile picture of the missionary wife, in Baird’s *Daybreak in Korea* we see her seeking to convey the new doctrine to Korean women visitors in the missionary compound,²² yet this effort appears subsidiary to the work of her husband, and the author seems to confirm the image of a woman in need of male assistance, rather than being able to deal independently with whatever situation she might face. The western lady struggles to converse with the Korean women. She talks in ‘carefully prepared sentences’ in Korean, but to her question ‘You all know about God, of course? But do you worship him?’, receives the answer ‘Why should we? He’s too far away. The demons are nearer.’ She then attempts to evangelize the women, telling them that ‘God loves you and wants you to worship him alone. He loves you so much that he sent his dearly beloved Son’, but succeeds only in baffling them: ‘What is she talking about? I can’t understand a word she says. It sounds like Korean, and yet it doesn’t’, puzzles one, while another is scornful: ‘Korean! How can she be talking Korean? Don’t you know that she’s an American? It’s American talk.’ The missionary’s wife persists, but is interrupted by one of her visitors, who changes the subject by demanding ‘How old are you?’ It seems that this effort to evangelize the local women has ended in failure when, ‘in a solid body Mrs Missionary’s audience deserted her... there was no getting a hearing from them’.

We also see the missionary wife’s lack of success in managing her Korean cook ‘Young Kyoo’, when: ‘He stood between Mrs Missionary and the little crowd of venders of various wares ... and succeeded in making purchases at much cheaper rates than she could have done, notwithstanding the fact that at every purchase a few cash pieces stuck to his own palm.’²³ Here we cannot help but see Mrs Missionary as out of her depth, weak, dependent and incompetent in her femininity.

Similarly, in *The Man in Grey* we see how the missionary wife struggles to converse in Korean with the local women, and her efforts to teach them western domestic methods are met with scepticism. When she demonstrates how to bathe a baby, her Korean women pupils remain unconvinced, and one elderly woman exclaims ‘Ah! ... She wouldn’t plunge it in water like that if ‘twere a boy, I know.’ Hearing this the missionary wife ‘underst[ands] nothing of the sentence but the tone of commiseration’ and responds ‘Don’t pity me! I’d rather have her than ten, ten boys-so there!’²⁴

²² Annie Baird, *Daybreak in Korea*, 62-64.

²³ *Ibid.* 65.

²⁴ *The Man in Grey*, 23.

Meanwhile, the missionary housing is sharply contrasted with the local poverty, such that the abode of the western couple appears as an imperial mansion, a suitable setting for the Victorian lady. Although built after the Korean model, 'with cornstalk walls neatly plastered over with mud, a roof covered with heavy tiles and projecting in very wide, overhanging eaves', the missionaries' house differs from those of their parishioners in that the 'main room, which was the sitting room, parlour, and hall in one, instead of being eight feet square, was twice' that size, and 'the floor, instead of being made of dried mud covered with coarse reed mats, was of wood and covered with neat rugs.'²⁵ However similar the outside of the house might be to its neighbours, inside it was in a thoroughly western style. Not all of the early missionaries lived in these newly constructed mission houses. Some purchased houses from wealthy Koreans and transformed them according to their own taste and style, building partitions, planting flower and vegetable²⁶ gardens, or even adding a tennis court. Furniture would include everyday items such as tables and chairs, baby's high chair and rocking chair,²⁷ but also sewing machine, typewriter, and even an organ.²⁸ Of the houses of the Korean common people we learn that 'a mud wall, thatched with a thin layer of straw, enclosed the small yard, and the low-roofed entrance gate'. A typical house would have two rooms, 'each about six feet by six, with height scarcely to match; and between them was a small square apartment, with one side open to the yard; this was the "maroo" or veranda, and was the rendezvous of the family in fine weather.'²⁹ The rooms were furnished with low tables and cushions for sitting on. The poorest people might have no furniture at all.

Baird seems to have been aware of critical voices raised against this disparity in wealth between the missionaries and the native Koreans,³⁰ and is keen to point out that far from living in luxury, the missionaries follow what would appear a fairly modest way of life from the perspective of the West, but that: 'The mere possession of such everyday articles as chairs, tables, rugs and a sewing machine puts us far off into the region of unattainable riches, and the plainest missionary home is still a palace in the eyes of the native.'³¹ Baird then proposes that to be effective the missionaries do not necessarily have to live as 'the

²⁵ *Daybreak in Korea*, 59-60.

²⁶ In her Letter to Gussie, April, 12, 1894, Baird writes of her own fruit and vegetable garden.

²⁷ In *Daybreak in Korea* Sim Ssi is shown trying to sit on it, making herself an object of ridicule to the other women.

²⁸ *Daybreak in Korea*, 59-60.

²⁹ See Jean Perry, *The Man in Grey*, 10-11.

³⁰ See Baird's Letter to Gussie, April 12, 1894.

³¹ Annie Baird, *Inside Views of Mission Life*, 25.

meek and lowly Jesus', saying that living in meekness may 'succeed in exciting a species of awed submission on the part of the people, but I have yet to be persuaded that it ever wins their love.'³²

George Gilmore, an American missionary in Korea from 1886 to 1888, concurs with Baird, arguing that if the missionaries lived in as humble a manner as the Catholic priests in Korea, then it would have been difficult to gain the respect of the local people. The apparent wealth of the westerners, and their comfortable homes, could be used to positive ends, as effective means of evangelization.³³ Korean visitors to the missionaries' houses would afterwards realize that the advanced knowledge and wealth of these westerners may stem from their Christian religion, and consequently Christianity would appeal to them more powerfully:

Koreans are fond of visiting the homes of foreigners. They admire the comforts - to them these comforts are the highest of luxuries - of the home life of the 'strangers'. They go home to ponder on the religion which takes hold of the present life of man and makes it more enjoyable. They mark our cheerful faces and our enjoyment of life, and wonder at the cause. They listen to the tales of the achievements of Western science. The huge cities, the wonderful railroad, the marvellous steam-boat, impress them with a sense of the lifting power of our civilization. When they realize that all this is the outcome and development of our religion, the practical value of Christianity makes a powerful appeal to them.³⁴

In the same vein, Mattie Noble, the wife of Arthur Noble, an American Methodist missionary in Korea, recorded in her diary the following reactions of some Korean visitors to her house:

When I invited them into the house, they were surprised and delighted, 'Oh', they said, 'how beautiful, like heaven'. ... 'Do our people live like this? No, but the lady serves God and He allows them to live in a pretty home in a foreign country.'³⁵

³²See *ibid.* 27. Baird appears to have been conscious of the danger of living in a meek way. Indeed, Dr William James Hall, who arrived in Korea 1891 as a missionary of the Methodist Episcopal (North) Church, died of typhus fever in November 1894, while the death in 1895 of the missionary William McKenzie, who had maintained a Korean life style, taking residence in Sorai, was 'a part of the mythology surrounding missionary work in Korea.' (See A. Hamish Ion, *The Cross and the Rising Sun: The Canadian Protestant Missionary Movement in the Japanese Empire, 1872-1931* (Waterloo, Ontario, Canada: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1990), 33.

Also see *Fifteen Years Among the Topknots*, 123-125. Lillias Underwood tells how Mr McKenzie, who had arrived from Canada in the winter of 1893, decided to go to the interior lands of Korea, and to live as much as possible like a native to better learn about the culture, people, and language. Reverend Underwood advised him to go to Sorai. In the early summer of 1895, Mr McKenzie wrote to ask Underwood to dedicate the church there, but before this could happen McKenzie became ill and died.

³³ See Gilmore, George W., *Korea from Its Capital* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication and Sabbath-School Work, 1892). See also Fred Harvey Harrington, *God, Mammon, and the Japanese: Dr Horace N. Allen and Korean-American relations, 1884-1905* (Madison, Wisconsin, 1944), especially Chapter 4.

³⁴Gilmore, George W., *Korea from Its Capital*, 316.

³⁵Noble, Mattie Wilcox. *Journals of Mattie Wilcox Noble, 1892-1934* (Seoul: Institute of Korean Church History Study, 1993), 112 (Diary entry for October 28th, 1903).

Similarly, Lillias Underwood writes that:

A Korean, one day after visiting a missionary's home, with its cabinet organ, sewing machine, typewriter, music box, foreign chairs and carpets, said as the most extravagant expression possible to his mind, that he had rather be an American missionary than king of Korea.³⁶

As shown above, the female missionaries' poor Korean language skills, and their low level of competence in dealing with staff or exercising leadership among the local women all contribute to a picture of woman as the weaker sex. Yet this weakness is contrasted with a certain indomitability in certain Korean women characters in the narratives. For example, Mrs Missionary's inability to act decisively or independently when plunged into crisis contrasts with the stubborn independence of mind shown by Mrs Yu and the leadership exercised by the young Korean Christian bride, who brings her whole family to Christianity. On the other hand, the apparent affluence of the missionaries, the wife living as a Victorian lady in a comfortable home with modern furniture and facilities, seems to have worked as an effective means of evangelization, prompting Korean women (and men) to make a link between Christian belief and western civilization.³⁷ Here it is worth noting that, given the disparity in wealth and the economic relations between the American missionaries³⁸ and the Korean people of the common class, the Christian teachings with regard to 'self-denial', 'self-sacrifice' and 'renunciation'³⁹ could have been a source of much misunderstanding. Certainly the idea of 'self-denial' became awkward among the western female missionaries, whose lives were undeniably comfortable and affluent in comparison with those of most of the local people.⁴⁰

Baird herself acknowledges the disparity, conceding the material comforts enjoyed by the missionaries and noting that: 'Compared with the people whom we have come to serve and

³⁶'Room at the top' *Korea Mission Field*, General Council of Evangelical Missions in Korea (ed.), vol.7 (March, 1911), 76-77.

³⁷ See F. H. Harrington, *God, Mammon, and the Japanese*, 95; See also, William Franklin Sands, *Undiplomatic Memories* (Seoul, 1975), 94.

³⁸ Ryu Dae Young maintains that missionaries from the United States, a capitalistic country *par excellence*, were under the influence of capitalism and shamelessly revealed the attitude of the middle class, even feeling the need to be models demonstrating the superiority of westernized modernization. (See Ryu Dae Young, *Chogi Miguk Sungyosa Yeongu 1884-1910* [Research on the Early American Missionary in Korea (1884-1910)], 12. See also Fred Harvey Harrington, *God Mammon and the Japanese*. Some foreign missionaries took advantage of their position to be involved in business interests.

³⁹ The acts of self-sacrifice among Korean (women) converts included generous offerings to the Church. See *Daybreak in Korea*, 109-110; see also Chilgoopie's offering in *Chilgoopie the Glad*, 124-125.

⁴⁰ See James Earnest Fisher, *Democracy and Mission Education in Korea* (reprinted by Yonsei Univ. Press, Seoul, Korea, 1970; originally printed in New York: 1928), 146.

to save, we live like princes and millionaires.’⁴¹ She also recounts a story of a young missionary, not long in the field in Korea, and greatly discouraged by the situation there:

We’re just tainted...

We came out expecting to find such missionary simplicity but, oh, it was all so different from the start from what we thought it would be⁴²...

To begin with, everybody called on us and left so many calling cards we didn’t know what they meant, and everywhere we went we found such nice Brussels carpets and things, and we were invited to a series of such stylish little teas, and it seemed so innocent and lovely, and we went in for the whole of it, and now we are worse than anybody else, and we can’t get out and I am not happy any of the time.⁴³

In response to this huge and unjustified disparity of wealth and power between the missionaries and the Korean people, one western missionary later explained:

We [American missionaries] really do not believe in a religion made up of self-sacrifice and renunciation; we believe in a rich and full life, abounding in a wide variety of human values. ... These ideals [self-sacrifice and renunciation] are a part of our religious heritage, but a part that means very little in real experience in the lives of those who profess them.⁴⁴

Yet if this is so, it prompts a question as to whether the western missionaries and their modern wealth helped the Korean people to improve their own economic standing. In the context of this thesis, the question relates particularly to the female missionaries, and the Korean women.

Certainly, the missionary narratives do not provide evidence of any specific or significant changes in the economic circumstances of the converted Korean women. Although, for example, in *Daybreak in Korea* the converted Pobai and Mansiki invite the people of the village to their own house, providing food and offering their place for use in evangelical works, we do not know exactly how they are able to afford to do this, and Baird does not mention any specific improvement in their economic affairs. In Wagner’s short story ‘Mittome’, it appears that the missionary has provided direct financial assistance by paying for Mittome’s release her ‘owner’, Lady Na. However, this is hardly a change in underlying

⁴¹Annie Baird, ‘The Relation of the Wives of Missionaries to Mission Work,’ *The Korean Repository*, Vol.2 (November, 1895), 418.

⁴²Annie Baird’s awareness of this criticism is evident in her Letter to Gussie (April 12, 1894, from Pusan):She notes that: ‘We have everything we need out here to make us comfortable and happy, except the one thing that we want most of all, and that is, more direct results of our life and labour here. ... I long to see this poor people illuminated with the love of Christ’, and explains that ‘The Board keeps writing us of the difficulty of raising money for missions at home, and of the adverse criticisms of passing travellers upon the style in which missionaries live. Will[Annie’s husband] and I, for two, would like to relieve the church as much as possible of our support, and to put ourselves outside the range of such criticisms, however unjust they may be.’

⁴³Annie Baird, ‘The Relation of the Wives of Missionaries to Mission Work,’ *The Korean Repository*, Vol.2 (November 1895), 418-419.

⁴⁴See James Earnest Fisher, *Democracy and Mission Education in Korea*, 147.

economic circumstance, and should be understood rather as an example of human benevolence.⁴⁵

In *The Man in Grey*, the converted Mr Min starts to work as a tailor, to earn money. While it is not clear whether his improved economic standing has to do with direct help from Mr Bright, the missionary, we do know that many Korean women and men did benefit from their relationship with the missionaries, some by gaining employment in the church, for example as Bible women or Korean *gwanso*⁴⁶; and some less directly, through information and church networks that expanded their opportunities.

The affluence of the missionaries, evident in the comfortable living conditions of the 'Victorian lady' missionary wives, appears to have been effective in evangelizing Korean women (and men). While this might not have been the missionaries' intention, there can be no doubt that this phenomenon was fairly common, and that it had the unforeseen and undesired effect of turning the Christian faith into a 'Prosperity Gospel.'

5.2. Strong Korean Women

Female power as superstitious domination: Sim Ssi

The female missionary narratives include many portraits of Korean women and girls who, before their conversion, are shown as powerless and victimized by Confucian tradition and religion. Pobai, a poor girl of the common class, is subject to a child marriage;⁴⁷ Peachblossom is sent to the magistracy to be a dancing girl;⁴⁸ Pokjumie is sold when only a child to become Mr Chang's concubine;⁴⁹ young Mrs Min is abused by her mother in law,⁵⁰ and Basil Firstborn commits suicide when her husband's new woman drives her away.⁵¹ Even some of the court women have been taken into service as children, separated from their lower class families and the rest of society.⁵²

⁴⁵See Ellasue Wagner, *Kim Su Bang and other stories of Korea* (Nashville: 1909), 66.

⁴⁶'Gwanso' means 'colporteur', that is, the person hired by the Bible Society to sell the Bible or tracts and evangelical books to the local people. In 1900, a male *kuanseo* hired by the Britain Bible Society was paid about 10 pounds (equivalent to around 50 dollars) per year, and a female *kuanseo* was paid half that. See Ryu Dae Young, *Chogi Miguk Sungyosa Yeongu 1884-1910* [Research on the Early American Missionary in Korea (1884-1910)], 85.

⁴⁷See Baird, *Daybreak in Korea*, 15.

⁴⁸See *ibid.* 16.

⁴⁹See Wagner, *Pokjumie*, 13.

⁵⁰See, Perry, *The Man in Grey*, 60.

⁵¹See Baird, *Daybreak in Korea*, 40.

⁵²Underwood, *Fifteen Years Among the Topknots*, 10-11.

Yet not all Choson women are portrayed as weak. One exception is the figure of the female shaman. While in Wagner's *Pokjumie* and Perry's *The Man in Grey* the *mudang* is not a prominent character, and these authors have little to say about the spirit worshipper and her role,⁵³ in Baird's *Daybreak in Korea* the *mudang* Sim Ssi is a major character.

The Korean word *mu-dang* is made up of *mu* 'the one who performs miracles' or 'the performance of miracles', and *dang* 'altar'. In theory, the role of *mudang* or shaman in Choson society belonged to one who was lowborn (*chonmin*), but in reality, it carried with it a high status. A *mudang* paid taxes⁵⁴ and even performed certain duties for the government.⁵⁵ The Choson Confucian male elites, when establishing Confucianism as a socio-political principle, originally suppressed female *mudang*, placing a strict prohibition on their activities throughout Choson.⁵⁶ For female *mudang* to communicate with spirits was considered a threat to the Confucian system of rationality,⁵⁷ and the idea of a strong female shaman did not fit into the Confucian gender system of separate spheres for men and women. Yet despite such criticism and persecution, shamanism of *mudang* survived in Choson, not only among the common people but also in the palace, the centre of the Confucian system.⁵⁸

In the later Choson the *mudang* were prominent figures. Around 90 percent were female, and they would preside over public healing rituals, performing special dances (*kut*) to exorcise the sick,⁵⁹ while males usually played a secondary role, as musical accompanists. Korean shamanism did not follow the same hierarchy of male and female as was found in the Confucian patriarchal system, especially in the late Choson period. The relation between women and men was viewed not as one of perpetual struggle for power, but as one of complement and harmony:

⁵³ Wagner uses the words of the noblewoman Mrs Chang to criticize the sorceress as ineffective (see *Pokjumie*, 51-52). Perry understands the *mudang* as a leader in spirit worship, and as such implicitly disapproves of this figure (see *The Man in Grey*, 60, 65).

⁵⁴ See J.S. Gale, *Korea in Transition* (New York, 1909). Gale refers to Isabella Bishop's estimate in *Korea and Her Neighbors* that 'demon worship [presided over by *mudang*] cost Korea \$1,250,000 a year' (83).

⁵⁵ *Mudang* were called on for government services and festivals to offer prayers and sacrifices to the spirits of fields, river, plains, rain and anything else that may have contributed to the success of the harvests. See *Daybreak in Korea*, 57.

⁵⁶ In an effort to suppress *mudang*, they were 'officially' barred from the capital of Choson, and in 1413 all books and documents related to *mudang* activities were confiscated and burned.

⁵⁷ Martina Deuchler, *Korean Women: View from the Inner Room* ed. Laurel Kendall & Mark Peterson (New Haven: East Rock Press, Inc., 1983), 2.

⁵⁸ See Youngsook Kim Harvey, *Six Korean Women: the Socialization of Shamans* (St. Paul: West Pub. Co, 1979), 10.

⁵⁹ See C. S. Song, 'Building a Theological Culture of People', *Asia Journal of Theology*, Vol.1, No.2 (1987), 283.

For a man to be thoroughly a male and a woman thoroughly a female, in a biological sense, is to be in full agreement with the rhythm of nature. Just as summer is naturally hot and winter naturally cold, both woman and man are equally indispensable and productive; neither is superior to the other.⁶⁰

Of course, this equality stands in stark contrast to the usual gender boundaries within the Confucian social structure. Consequently, the female *mudang* was a rare exception to the 'domestic' role allotted to women according to the Confucian norm of womanhood.⁶¹ These women had licence to 'extend private powers into public spheres', and 'consequently reverse gender roles within their own domestic realms. As a consequence of the professional and public status of *mudang*, it is commonplace for their husbands to assume the feminine duties of housekeeping, shopping, attending to the children.'⁶²

Indeed, in Baird's novel *Sim Ssi* the female *mudang* takes a prominent role, while Ko Pansoo the male accompanist is her assistant. It is Sim Ssi who leads the performance of the shamanic ritual, representing the family in offering sacrifices and prayers, while Ko Pansoo, who fakes blindness, plays a secondary role with his knowledge of geomancy and the power of magic.⁶³ As an older woman who is also the *mudang*, Sim Ssi is depicted as a powerful figure controlling the village community through her religious power.

As *mudang*, one of Sim Ssi's important functions is to provide comfort and healing to the people of the village. However, for Baird, the female shaman's performance of comfort and healing is based entirely on the 'superstition' that rules Choson village life. Moreover, Sim Ssi is portrayed as a moneymaking magician who has little regard for the people she treats.⁶⁴ When Pobai's daughter '*Kwihi*' (Precious) is infected by *Son-nim* (smallpox)⁶⁵ and Pobai approaches Sim Ssi for help, the *mudang* agrees to hold a healing ceremony for the baby but, despite Pobai's poverty, there is no question of her waiving her fee. Instead, she advises Pobai on how she might bring the stack of straw from her front yard, even though that is not Pobai's property to give. Sim Ssi is ruthless on this point:

⁶⁰ Hahm Pyong-Choon, 'Shamanism and the Korean World View', *Shamanism: The Spirit World of Korea*, ed. Richard W. I. Guisso and Chain Shin Yu (Berkeley, California, 1988), 63.

⁶¹ Janice C.H. Kim, 'Processes of feminine power: Shamans in central Korea', in Keith Howard (ed.), *Korean Shamanism: Revivals, Survivals and Change* (Seoul, Korea: the Royal Asiatic Society, Korea Branch, Seoul press, 1998), 117.

⁶² *Ibid.* 124.

⁶³ See *Daybreak in Korea*, 43.

⁶⁴ See *ibid.* e.g., Pobai's case, 33-38.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* 33-36.

It's broad noon all the day round at your house, is it? ... Use your wits, if you've got any, and bring me that straw between now and daylight, if you want anything done for your child.⁶⁶

Baird's portrayal is of a woman motivated not by duty or care for the community, but by money alone. This is underlined later when, after Pobai has delivered the straw to Sim Ssi, she finds that she is to be sold by her-parents-in-laws to Mansiki. Once again she seeks help from Sim Ssi, but the *mudang* shows no compassion; she responds to Pobai's request with indifference, concerned only that, 'I've got the straw anyway'.⁶⁷ Moreover, Sim Ssi's supposed powers are revealed by Baird as fake, when a ceremony to heal Mansiki's parents ends in failure. Here, indeed, Baird shows Sim Ssi to be both incompetent and deceitful, as the *mudang* attempts to explain away her own failure by pointing to Mansiki's lack of filial feeling; he has paid her so little that she 'can't summon any power to prevail'.⁶⁸

Sim Ssi's assistant Ko Pansoo is also her partner in commercial dealings. Upon hearing that Ko Pansoo has become a Christian believer, Sim Ssi tells him: 'The Jesus doctrine will leave nothing of your trade or mine if it keeps on. I'd be starving if my present practice was all I had to depend on.'⁶⁹

For Baird, the process of Sim Ssi's conversion is not solely one from religious superstition to true belief; she goes further by emphasizing that the former practice is no more than a commercial activity, even before it is set in contrast with Christianity. According to Baird, the Christian missionaries are delivering the people from a quasi-religion, a disguised business that exploits people's hopes and trust.⁷⁰ Emphasizing this point, Baird describes how Sim Ssi rules over the whole community, like 'a despot'.⁷¹

Female power in shamanism in Choson

Baird's highly negative depiction of *mudang* Sim Ssi raises a question as to how far this assessment was based upon her own understanding of Christianity and its missionary interest.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* 35.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* 37-38.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* 45.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* 96.

⁷⁰ The question of whether Sim Ssi's 'business' was ever anything other than commerce should be re-examined here, especially in the light of criticism of some western Christian missionaries, who had extensive business interests in Choson. See Rye Dae Young's *Chogi miguk seongyosa Yeongu*, [The research of the Early American Missionary in Korea] (Seoul, 2001). As Annie Baird herself noted, it is 'absolutely necessary for the foreign missionary to avoid all suspicion of exploiting the people or the country for his own personal [financial] benefit.' See Baird, *Inside Views of Mission Life* (Philadelphia, 1913), 37-38.

⁷¹ Baird, *Daybreak in Korea*, 96.

Laurel Kendall, in her book *Shamans, Housewives, and other Restless Spirits*,⁷² cites early ethnologists' description of Korean household religion as a 'dual organization', and claims that for these early scholars the ritual lives of men and women in Choson were differentiated along gender lines, such that men's rituals worshipping the ancestors were considered 'Confucian,' while women's rituals honouring the household gods and expelling ghosts were dismissed as 'shamanism, folk beliefs, and superstition.'⁷³ Kendall maintains that rituals of shamanism and spirit worship were usually led by women, but that these practices were often discriminated against and undervalued by the male Confucian elite. In this sense, we can infer from Baird's account that the Protestant Church mission aligned itself with the Confucian elite, understanding the *mudang*'s performance as private ritual, lacking in morality, having commerce with evil spirits and intended for personal gain.⁷⁴ In other words, the Confucian elite and the Protestant Church missionaries somehow joined together in an effort to remove female spiritual power and leadership in Choson and, as James Huntley Grayson proposes,⁷⁵ replace the female spiritual leadership with Christian male missionaries. In doing so the missionaries adopted and adapted the leadership of Confucian males, thus demonstrating their close alliance.⁷⁶

If the praxis of Choson female spiritual power is denigratingly subsumed into what is termed 'shamanism', can female power in shamanism be so trivialized? Female shamans as members of a wider community represent 'a more comprehensive world view', closely related to 'economic and social structures', occupying more than an 'ideological premise' that is 'upheld, and reproduced through socially sanctioned practices.'⁷⁷

In line with the above argument, drawing on a case study of the Siberian Khanty, Peter Jordan has maintained that shamanism is not a 'free-floating' ideological construct, but is

⁷² L. Kendall, *Shamans, Housewives, and other Restless Spirits: Women in Korean Ritual Life* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1985).

⁷³ *Ibid.* 26-27.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.* 32-34.

⁷⁵ James Huntley Grayson explores how Christianity in Korea became rooted in a relatively short period of time, and explicates its process of implantation through three phases: 'Contact and Explication' 'Penetration' and 'Growth and Contention.' Grayson states that in the process of implanting and propagating the Christian belief in Choson, and overcoming a significant conflict of core values between Confucianism and Christianity, some sort of adaptation and negotiation were worked out, which resulted in keeping a part of the core Confucian patriarchal values intact. See 'The Implantation of Christianity: An Anthropological Examination of the Korean Church,' *Transformation: An International Journal of Holistic Mission Studies*, 26 (July 2009), 161-173.

⁷⁶ See James Huntley Grayson, *Early Buddhism and Christianity in Korea: A Study in the Implantation of Religion* (E.J. Brill: Leiden, 1985), 137.

⁷⁷ Peter Jordan, 'The materiality of shamanism as a "world-view": Praxis, artefacts, and landscape', in *The Archaeology of Shamanism*, Neil S. Price (ed.) (Routledge: London, 2001), citing J. Pentikainen's *Shamanism and Culture* (Helsinki: Etnika Co., 1998), 88.

firmly grounded in the materiality of the human world. The role of the shaman, then, is a reflexion of this existing social and material environment, and is not simply ideologically created and born out of a purposefully constructed institution as are most other religions. If this observation is correct, then female power and leadership derived from the communal life is a naturally lived reality, not an artificially created ideological system, and female spiritual leadership in Choson was naturally born out of the grounded community there.

Sim Ssi's Conversion: a denial of female leadership in Choson?

Sim Ssi is eventually converted to Christianity, but Baird leaves us unsure as to her character's motivation. Having once enjoyed power and authority over the villagers, the *mudang* comes to realize that many of those villagers are becoming Christians, often gathering for worship at the house of Mansiki and Pobai. In response to this 'challenge', Sim Ssi decides to visit the place of gathering to 're-establish her old supremacy,'⁷⁸ carrying with her the fan and the little brass disc through which she used to communicate with the power of 'darkness.'⁷⁹ However, she fails in her bid to regain the villagers' awe and respect, and instead finds herself the subject of their prayers, led by her old associate Ko Pansoo. Set against a mysterious power she is somehow unable to resist, Sim Ssi is moved to tear off her sorceress garments, to 'cast away her fan and disc'⁸⁰ and, eventually and miraculously, to convert to Christianity.⁸¹ The whole process is presented as quite natural and not at all surprising, despite her previous dominant position and powerful leadership as a female priest of the local religion.

Yet whatever doubts there might have been concerning Sim Ssi's initial motivation, it is clear from Baird's further description that it is genuine, for:

Once more a leader, but for good now instead of evil, Sim Ssi laboured incessantly. Everywhere through the hills and valleys she went, taking with her portions of Scripture and hymnbooks, and telling everywhere the story of salvation. She had been widely known as a priestess of evil, and now her fame spread as a fearless follower of the Lord Jesus Christ.⁸²

Another interesting point regarding Sim Ssi's conversion is that, in coming after that of Ko Pansoo, the intrinsic gender structure has also been reversed. No longer is Sim Ssi, the woman, the leader, or Ko her subordinate. Rather, their relationship now seems to reflect

⁷⁸ *Daybreak in Korea*, 96-97.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.* 97.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.* 98.

⁸¹ *Ibid.* 99.

⁸² *Ibid.* 101.

the Christian patriarchal order, where the man is the more active partner, and leads the woman, providing spiritual advice and assistance. Moreover, Sim Ssi's previous dominant position as a leader in the local community is lost, while she gratefully accepts her new and vulnerable position.

What, then, is the meaning of Sim Ssi's conversion? Baird tells us that having accepted the Christian message, Sim Ssi becomes as eager a follower of Christ as she was a powerful priest in the religion of superstition. It is noteworthy that her conversion appears to have been brought about through the male *mudang* Ko Pansoo, and not through the missionary or his wife, nor any of the Christian women villagers. What is Baird telling us here through the conversion of this woman, this 'dark power', once the leading figure in village superstition, especially in terms of gender discourse? For Baird, Sim Ssi's leadership as a practitioner of superstition was neither effective nor helpful for the people of the village, however richly the *mudang* herself might have profited from it. Only later, after undergoing conversion to Christianity and becoming a servant of Christ, does Sim Ssi gain genuine spiritual power to give comfort and healing. After her conversion Sim Ssi uses her spiritual power well, successfully expelling a demon spirit from Toulchai Umuni. Her spiritual power and strength rely not on her previous profession as a spiritual healer, but on the new spirit of Christianity, proving Christianity as the only true religion.

By her depiction of Sim Ssi's life after her conversion, Baird seems intent upon demonstrating that Christianity is the most powerful religion, offering people comfort and healing in an authentic and genuine way, and bringing with it advanced (western) civilization. Shamanism, on other hand, is the obsolete, archaic religion of Choson, something like a 'fetish', which is to be thrown away. Here, however, it is not clear whether Baird also intended to discard the female power that Sim Ssi had once possessed. The author may have been using Sim Ssi only as the representative of the local religion, rather than as an embodiment of female power. Nevertheless, whether intentionally or not, by targeting a female character who exercises powerful leadership, Baird robs females of their power in spirituality and leadership as revealed in the old religion of Choson. The leading role that Sim Ssi had played, irrespective of Baird's or our own judgment upon its genuineness or efficacy, is erased, to be replaced by male figures, such as Mansiki and Ko Pansoo, and above all by the male missionary, who takes over the leadership and incorporates the spiritual power of the old religion of Choson into Christian belief.

Not only are female power and leadership replaced by male authority; so too there is a social and institutional realignment from an indigenous Choson society to that of an

imported Protestant Christianity, which has its own considerable ramifications for gender discourse. The once dominant female Sim Ssi now exercises her gifts of spirituality in the service of her master, Christ. She is now doubly subject, as a woman in the male-centred religion of Christianity, located within a male-dominated Confucian society.

With the arrival of Christianity, the female leadership exemplified in shamanism could not survive. Once Christianity has become prevalent, it is the male missionaries and the male Christian believers who assume the positions previously held by female leaders. The strong leading role of women, like the *mudang* in shamanism, has been destroyed.

Thus, in the late 19th and early 20th century, western female missionaries brought new values from the West, desiring to raise the status of women in Korea. Yet they strongly identified themselves with domestic roles, aligned with the Victorian gender ideology of their home society,⁸³ and condemned the non-domestic types of womanhood they encountered in the mission field. As they were often bound by their own cultural repertoire, whether consciously or subconsciously they reshaped cultural meaning within the patriarchal Victorian Christian gender ideology; and Annie Baird, along with other female missionaries who worked during the early years of mission in Korea, appears not to have been an exception.

5.3. The Non-converted Converter: Female Missionaries and Gender Inequality

Although western missionary women have acted as agents to fight against and release women from the constraints of patriarchal Confucian Choson society, at the same time, those female missionaries were subject to their own patriarchal church structure.⁸⁴ Hence the position of western women was a complicated one.

Despite their own restrictive gender code, it appears that among missionary circles there was a strong belief that Christianity had delivered women's emancipation in the West. In 1898 George H. Jones wrote: 'The [Confucian] sages of Korea taught the nation that

⁸³ See Leslie A. Flemming 'A New Humanity: American Missionaries' Ideals for Women in North India, 1870-1930', in Nupur Chaudhuri and Margaret Strobel (eds.), *Western Women and Imperialism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 191-206.

⁸⁴ In the late 19th and early 20th century Western women missionaries, who were often treated as authoritative figures in the mission field of Korea, would rarely be allowed at the podium to preach at home. In Perry's *The Man in Grey* we see how the leadership of Miss Smart at a mixed gathering within the annual missionary conference in Korea was questioned. See Perry, *The Man in Grey*, 108-110.

woman is inferior to man. Christianity flatly contradicts this, and there is a clash.’⁸⁵

Similarly, in his *The Passing of Korea*, Homer B. Hulbert insists that:

Such seclusion [of Choson Confucian women] is a mean between the promiscuity of savage tribes and the emancipated condition of women in enlightened countries. It is as much better than the former as it is worse than the latter. There can be no question that it is Christianity which has brought about the desirable conditions that prevail in the West, and we need look for no such conditions in the East until it is permeated with ideas emanating from Christian standards.⁸⁶

The female missionaries too believed that Christian morality would bring equality and freedom to Korean women, and deliver them from bondage. They believed themselves ‘blessed’ to have been born in a Christian land, and wanted to confer the same blessing to Koreans,⁸⁷ a viewpoint encapsulated in a letter from Lulu Frey to her sister Georgia:

I wish you could see our babies in the hospital. We have three now. We keep them there until they are old enough for school. We have to turn a great many away who would give us their children and we could train them as *Christians* ... You ought to be very glad to be a ‘Mecuk Ayhe (American child).’⁸⁸

It is notable here that the missionary women were comparing their own social position to that of their ‘heathen sisters’, yet seem not to have compared themselves with their brothers at home. They viewed themselves as privileged rather than oppressed, justifying their own involvement in mission work on behalf of women and children, while viewing the nascent ‘feminist political movement’ at home with scepticism.⁸⁹

For Lillias Underwood, the disparity in status between Korean and western women was manifested particularly in terms of access to education, and child marriage. Underwood attributes these differences to religion, or in the case of Korea, the lack of the ‘true’ religion:

To the Korean girl wife there is no vision, no future, no life above the animal. ... This is where the yoke is hard and the burden heavy. No inspiration, no vision, no God who loves and pities them, who has stooped to share their burdens.

⁸⁵ See George H. Jones, ‘Open Korea and Its Methodist Mission’, *The Gospel in All Lands*, Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, (September, 1898), 392.

⁸⁶ Homer B. Hulbert, *The Passing of Korea* (New York: 1906), 350.

⁸⁷ See Karen K. Seats, ‘Providence Has Freed Our Hands’: *Women’s Missions and the American Encounter with Japan* (Syracuse, NY: 2008), 120. See also Katherine H. Lee Ahn, *Awakening the Hermit Kingdom* (Pasadena, Calif.: William Carey Library, 2009), trans. Kim Sung Woung, *Chosonui Eodumeul balkin yeosungdeul* (Seoul, 2012), 130-131; See also Annie Baird, *Ko Young Gyu Jeon*: ‘The Jesus’ doctrine does not oppress us women, but rather pities them’ (16).

⁸⁸ Lulu Frey’s letter to her sister Georgia, dated Nov. 7th, 1893. (Copy in the author’s archive.)

⁸⁹ See Joan Jacobs Brumberg, ‘The Ethnological Mirror: American Evangelical Women and Their Heathen Sisters, 1870-1910’, in *Women and the Structure of Society: Selected Research from the Fifth Berkshire Conference on the History of Women*, Barbara J. Harris and Jo Ann K. McNamara (eds.), (Durham, N.C.: 1984), 113. See also U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States, 1789-1945* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1975).

Describing her character Pobai's misery in her life as a child wife, Baird also attributes her survival to the Christian God:

Why Pobai did not put an end to her wretched life in the days and weeks and months and years that followed, I did not know, except it was because the good God had something better in store for her.⁹⁰

Similarly, for Wagner's eponymous Pokjumie, it is Christian faith that enables her to overcome the horrors inflicted upon her by Na' Sung Mung. When he throws her into the chamber of corpses, Pokjumie finds refuge in the Word, taking comfort from lines she has memorized, such as 'Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.'⁹¹

In Perry's *The Man in Grey* we see how the conversion of Mr Min, head of a Confucian household, changes his behaviour towards his wife. Perry indicates this through scenes such as one in which he interferes to stop his mother beating her daughter-in-law when she burns the rice.⁹² Previously, Mr Min would have approved his mother's behaviour, blaming his young wife and believing her in need of correction.⁹³ Both women are amazed at this turn of events, but the young wife recognizes the reason behind it: her husband has a 'new heart.'⁹⁴

The idea that Christianity offered a 'better' or 'advanced' vision of womanhood was prevalent among the women missionaries. Making a sharp distinction between Christianity and other faiths, the missionary authors would condemn non-Christian religions,⁹⁵ while designating Christian belief as the one good and true ideal, which could emancipate women from vicious power.⁹⁶ For the female missionaries, Protestant Christianity was set to protest inequality and the wrongs against women,⁹⁷ while the native 'heathen' religions were not. Wagner's *Kumokie* offers a typical example of this attribution of 'advanced' or 'modern' womanhood to Christianity. In this narrative Wagner criticizes polygamy and child marriage, which blight the life of her title character, Kumokie.⁹⁸ Moreover, it is western Christian education that transforms Kumokie from helpless child widow, bestowing upon

⁹⁰ Baird, *Daybreak in Korea*, 40.

⁹¹ See Ellasue Wagner, *Pokjumie*, 86-88.

⁹² Perry, *The Man in Grey*, 59.

⁹³ *Ibid.* 60.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.* 63.

⁹⁵ See Baird, *Daybreak in Korea*, 54.

⁹⁶ See *ibid.* Chapter VI, 'The power of meekness', where Pobai's power of meekness in Christian belief eventually defeats the violence of Mansiki. pp. 69ff.

⁹⁷ See Karen K. Seats, 'Providence Has Freed Our Hands', 120.

⁹⁸ Ellasue Wagner, *Kumokie: A bride of old Korea* (Nashville: 1922).

her the honourable and ‘gracious dignity of the lady’.⁹⁹ In more detail, Kumokie is a granddaughter of Mr Ye, a wealthy but common class Confucian Korean. She has a traditional upbringing, and because there are no sons in her family, Mr Ye arranges for the child Kumokie to be married to Kim Noch Kyung, the youngest son of a *yangban* family, and now the designated heir to Mr Ye. Later, however, after a dispute with Mr Ye, Kim Noch Kyung departs from the house, leaving Kumokie as a young ‘widow’, while taking a new ‘small wife’, Casagie. Kumokie now feels alone, and struggles to manage under the Confucian patriarchal authority of Mr Ye. After the death of her mother, Kumokie goes to live with the family of her uncle Mr Chun, a devout Christian who arranges for his niece to be educated at the missionary-run institution. As a result, Kumokie grows to be a lady of intelligence.

Here, Wagner proposes an idea of ‘advanced’ western Christian womanhood, linking Christianity with independence of mind and intelligence, as opposed to the subservient or ‘non-entity’ status which, for Wagner, is central to the traditional Confucian model of womanhood. We see this clearly in the contrast between the educated Kumokie and the ignorant, dependent, Mrs Ye and Casagie, the ‘small wife’ of Kim Noch Kyung.

Mrs Ye, the typical traditional Confucian wife of Kumokie’s grandfather Mr Ye, is described as ‘timid, shrinking’. She is ‘as colourless and faded as the sea on a rainy day. Her only desire was to remain unobserved and to keep from displeasing her lord and master [her husband] any more than she could possibly help.’¹⁰⁰ In her husband’s eyes she is a being without ideas; as he tells her: ‘Who would be so stupid as to expect conversation from a woman? ... I really do not expect you to make intelligent conversation.’¹⁰¹

Casagie (meaning in Korean, ‘What-you-may-call-her’), the ‘small wife’ of Kim Noch Kyung, is another model of traditional Confucian womanhood, one who accepts without question inequality in the marital relationship. While she would give her life to please her husband, it does not occur to her to seek anything from him, least of all that he should turn to her for advice and companionship. ‘She was only “the inside of the house”, a nonentity.’¹⁰²

Thus, through these representations of traditional Confucian women, wives and ‘small wives’ who do not express independent ideas but act as servants to their husbands and other

⁹⁹ *Ibid.* 224.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.* 11.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.* 11-12.

¹⁰² *Ibid.* 142-143.

male family members, Wagner makes a critique on the traditional indigenous womanhood in Confucian Choson.

Against this Confucian idea of woman as a non-agent or 'nonentity', Wagner sets the western Victorian Christian ideal of womanhood, represented in Kumokie's aunt, Maria. We learn that Maria had been the first believer in Okchun, and had overcome the opposition of the local people, leading her husband Chun to Christ. Chun then became a class leader and Sunday school superintendent, and 'was not ashamed to pay honour' to his 'bright' and 'useful' wife.¹⁰³ Maria, too, became a teacher, educating fifteen local girls. She is a woman of 'tender heart and compassion', always ready to 'go to those who were sad or in need'.¹⁰⁴ This ideal figure is a companion to her male partner, a teacher and guide to children, a model of Christian morality, and the creator of a Christian home.

Wagner shows how, under the guardianship of Maria, and with the benefit of western Christian education, Kumokie is transformed from a traditional Confucian girl into a dignified lady.¹⁰⁵ She is an intelligent woman with an independent mind, as clearly revealed in the scene in which Kim Noch Kyung visits the girl's school to meet her. Here, she overcomes her inner struggle and finds the courage to speak her own mind to the husband who abandoned her, telling him: 'You have no right to come here like this.'¹⁰⁶ She dares to accuse him: 'Why should I be angry? You left Saemal and the child [Kumokie] there with no care for what ill fate might befall her. I also realize how miserably low and selfish are your motives in coming here now to destroy my peace of mind.' Going further yet, she criticizes Kim Noch Kyung for his behaviour in taking a 'small wife'; when he refers to Kumokie as his wife she retorts, 'Your wife? Never! What of the wife and children at [your] home? ...Do you know that to us Christians death is preferable to dishonour? Now leave me instantly! Not one word more will I hear!'¹⁰⁷

Yet despite this transformation in Kumokie, her independence of mind and the confidence to challenge her husband and the ideas of Confucian Korean society, nevertheless she remains subject to certain gender restraints. For example, as Wagner tells us, 'Her mind was always craving more knowledge, yet never for a moment did she shun or neglect the common household tasks.'¹⁰⁸ Here it becomes clear that according to Wagner's ideal of

¹⁰³ *Ibid.* 126-7.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.* 123,124,127.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.* 224.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.* 145.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.* 147-148.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.* 127.

Christian femininity, a woman has a right to education, and to be recognized as intelligent and capable of independent thought, but she should not forget that her proper place is in the home, and that her main role is a domestic one.

This limitation to women's autonomy is underlined further by Kumokie's reaction to her abduction by men hired by Kim Noch Kyung. Rather than denounce him, after some struggle she eventually accepts Noch Kyung as her husband, subjugating her will to his. Hence, while gender equality was certainly considered an important indicator of 'Christian' civilization and modernity, it seems that the practice often fell short of the principle.

In her autobiography, *My Forty Year Fight for Korea*¹⁰⁹ Louise Yim refers to the process of Korea's modernization around 1915, and denounces the way in which the women missionaries' education for Korean women and girls was intended to produce 'domestic' women, at the very time when women wanted to escape this restraint. She relates how the missionaries insisted on women at her school wearing the *sigachima*, a linen cloth covering a woman's head and body. Yim challenged this, believing that the *sagachima* was not a suitable garment for a modern environment. Hearing of this, the missionary Miss Golden responded, 'Radicals! ... Terrible, horrible radicals who have only one thought - to disturb good Christians!' To this Yim retorted 'You love the Korean people, don't you, Miss Golden? *Wouldn't you want our customs to change, for our people to become as progressive as you of America?*'¹¹⁰ The interesting point here is that it is the Korean women who are seeking to modernize their situation, while ironically it is the western women missionaries who hold them back. While the missionary women claimed Christianity as the bringer of gender emancipation, in practice it seems that they were reluctant to allow Korean women to become equal in a Christian (modern) society. This is surprising considering that even within Korea, there was a movement arguing against the traditional customs and in favour of women's emancipation. This is clearly expressed by Kim Myung Soon, in her 1916 novel *The Suspicious Girl*,¹¹¹ featuring a 'new' woman, seeking equal rights and emancipation.

Kumokie was published in 1922. At that time, in the West, the women's rights movement was growing in strength. Yet out in the mission field of Korea, Wagner

¹⁰⁹ Louise (Youngshin) Yim, *My Forty Year Fight for Korea* (Seoul: International Culture Research Center, Chungang University, 1951), 69.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ See *Kim Myung Soon's Collection*, compiled by Song Myung Hee, (Seoul, 2012), 25-36.

continued to promote an idea of domestic womanhood.¹¹² While the female missionaries strongly challenged the male-centred culture and religion in Korea, they seem to have been unwilling to address the inequalities in their own situation, adhering firmly to their belief in the high status bestowed upon women by Christianity.

Interestingly, although mission would usually follow a system of gender separation imposed by the dominant social structure of the ‘heathen’ lands, so that male missionaries would minister to men, and female missionaries to women, in the missionary narratives this is not always the case. Often the evangelization of female characters is accomplished by men, and the western male missionaries are portrayed as ‘rescuers’ of the indigenous women, as if the authors are keen to uphold the Victorian gender ideology and the patriarchal hierarchy of the Christian church. Pobai, the protagonist in *Daybreak in Korea*, is evangelized by a male missionary, as is Mittome (Agie) in *Kim Su Bang*. It seems then that the ‘rescue’ of women in the non-western world can only be brought about by men, representatives of male dominated Christianity. This seems to offer few options for the native women to rectify the evils of their own discriminatory culture as active and autonomous subjects.

With regard to this, the Chinese female scholar Li-Hsiang Lisa Rosenlee quotes Chandra T. Mohanty to support her claim that western (female) scholarship has tended to imagine ‘all’ non-Western women as ‘victims’ of ‘their own “traditional” sexist culture’, even though these western women scholars do not act as subjects or agents to create change and transformation in their own patriarchal system.¹¹³ This monolithic portrayal of non-western women as a ‘homogeneous entity’, alongside the failure to realize the sexist ideology of western Christianity ‘limits theoretical analysis’ and ‘reinforces Western cultural imperialism.’¹¹⁴

Certainly, missionary women fought to change the customs and tradition of Confucian old Korea, but this seems not to have led to a reassessment of their own culture, at least during the ‘early’ Korean mission period. As far as we can tell, the women missionaries hardly

¹¹² This is surprising considering that even within Korea, there was a movement arguing against the traditional customs and in favour of women’s emancipation. This is clearly expressed by Kim Myung Soon, in her 1916 novel *The Suspicious Girl* (in *Kim Myung Soon’s Collection*, compiled by Song Myung Hee (Seoul, 2012), 25-36), which features a ‘new’ woman, seeking equal rights and emancipation.

¹¹³ Li-Hsiang Lisa Rosenlee, *Confucianism and Women* (Albany: State University of New York, 2006), 139.

¹¹⁴ See Chandra Mohanty, “Under Western Eyes,” in *Colonial Discourse and Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*, ed. Patrick Williams and Laura Christman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 214.

reflected upon their own situation, or the structural inequalities in their home society.¹¹⁵ This may be explained, in part, by their belief that they did truly enjoy an ‘advanced’ state of womanhood, and that this was a result of their Christian religion. Hence, even while they were challenging the male-oriented culture of the ‘heathen’ society, many continued to keep intact, rather than challenge, the gender and family norms in their home society. Moreover, while the Victorian and Christian model of domestic womanhood supported by the female missionaries may well have contributed to liberating Korean women from the bondage of Confucian tradition, the attribution of such liberation to male missionaries served to maintain male domination, this time within the patriarchal structure of the supposedly ‘modern’ western Christian church.

5.4. Fighting *For* but not *With* Korean Women

The female missionaries’ novels and narratives contain many stories of Korean women. However, it is notable that most of these characters are of the common or lower classes, while we meet very few higher class, or *yangban*, women. One reason for this may be the missionaries’ strategic targeting of the common class, rather than the higher class,¹¹⁶ while another might be that they had easier access to the lower class women, who may have been more receptive to the new faith.¹¹⁷ Certainly, women lower down the social scale had very little, if anything, to lose from a disruption of the Confucian system in Choson.¹¹⁸ Whatever the reasons may have been, we find that in Baird’s *Daybreak in Korea*, Pobai and Kesiki seem to be from the common class, as is Sim Ssi, the *mudang*. The same is true of Perry’s ‘*hulmonie*’ in *Chilgoopie the Glad* and Mrs Hwang in *Uncle Mac the Missionary*. We are not told explicitly about the social background of the young Mrs Min in *The Man in Grey*, but although Mr Min is a *yangban*, he is also very poor, and might not have been able

¹¹⁵ Joan Jacobs Brumberg, ‘The Ethnological Mirror’, 115; See also Jane Hunter, *The Gospel of Gentility: American women missionaries in turn-of-the-century China* (New Haven, 1984), xvi. ‘Unlike such organizations as the Women’s Christian Temperance union, which advocated the vote and pitched the powers of womanly influence against the liquor interest, missionary women battled only alien forces and men of another society or a “lesser” race.’

¹¹⁶ See C.C. Vinton, ‘Presbyterian Mission Work in Korea’, in *The Missionary Review of the World*, Vol. 9, No. 6 (September, 1893), 671.

¹¹⁷ See Baird’s ‘Letter to Gussie’, dated 12 April 1894, where she writes that Korean women from the lower class were more receptive, while the upper class women were less open to the missionaries’ evangelical activities.

¹¹⁸ Park Chung Shin, a scholar of Korean church history, maintains that the first Koreans to listen to the Western Protestant missionaries were mainly of the common and lower class, for they ‘lost little politically or economically by becoming Christians.’ On the other hand, for a *yangban* to accept the Christian message that all humanity is created equal would mean giving up their privileged position. See Park Chung Shin, *Protestantism and Politics in Korea* (Seattle, 2003), 26-27.

to afford to have a *yangban* wife. Underwood too seems to favour characters from the lower class, such as the dancing girl and the court maid. Only in the works of Wagner do we find many and significant *yangban* women characters, such as Mrs Chang, Lady Na in *Pokjumie*, Mrs Kim, the mother of Kim Duck Kyung in *Kumokie*, and Mrs Kim, the wife of Kim Su Bang, in *Kim Su Bang*.

This lack of *yangban* women characters is surprising, given the relatively large size of that class as a proportion of the population in the late Choson period. According to the research of Shikata Hiroshi¹¹⁹ [四方博], in the middle and late Choson periods, from the 17th to the end of the 19th century, there were significant changes in the size and population of the different castes. For example, in 1690, 9.2% of *ho* (戸, family) in the Daigu region were *yangban*, while 49.5% were of the common class. By 1858, the proportion of *yangban* had increased to 70.3%, while only 28.2% of *ho* were of the common class.¹²⁰ In short then, as can be seen from the tables below, by 1858, the *yangban* population was significantly higher than that of the common class.

TABLE 2
THE NUMBER AND PROPORTION OF *HO* 戸 BY CASTE
(CLASS)¹²¹

	<i>Yangban</i>	Common	<i>Nobi</i> (slave)	Total
The year 1690	290 (9.2%)	1,694 (53.7%)	1,172 (37.1%)	3,156 (100%)
The year 1858	2,099 (70.3%)	842 (28.2%)	44 (1.5%)	2,985 (100%)

¹¹⁹ Hiroshi Shikata[四方 博](1900-1973), a Japanese economist, with his major research area in economic history in Choson society. See 四方博朝鮮文庫目録[Hiroshi Shikata's Choson library list], edited and published by 東京経済大学図書館[Tokyo Keizai University Library], 2010.

¹²⁰ See Miasimahiroshi [官島博史], *Yangban* [兩班 : 李朝社会の特権階層], trans. No Young Gu (Seoul, 2014), 38-39. This research was based on the family register of Daigu, which was kept to ensure that caste members fulfilled the 'duty' imposed on them; specifically, men of the common class were required to undertake military service for the Choson central government.

¹²¹ *Ibid.* 255.

TABLE 3
THE NUMBER AND PROPORTION OF POPULATION BY
CASTE¹²²

	<i>Yangban</i>	<i>Common</i>	<i>Nobi</i>
The year 1690	1,027 (7.4%)	6,894 (49.5%)	5,992 (43.1%)
The year 1858	6,410 (48.6%)	2,659 (20.1%)	4,126 (31.3%)

What, then, are we to make of the fact that the missionary authors chose to focus on the common women as their major characters, rather than on women of the noble class? Could it be explained, at least in part, by the missionaries' desire to demonstrate the fruits of their mission? Certainly, tales of conversion and dramatic transformation were far more common among the common classes.

It is also notable that, when *yangban* characters are portrayed, it is often in a negative light. For example, in *Pokjumie*, the *yangban* Mr Chang brings the concubine Kisaeng into his house, even though he already has a wife and one concubine, Pokjumie. While the 'possession' of many women may be an expression of wealth, it is certainly not an indication of sound morality. Of course, not all *yangban* were wealthy. Mr Min in *The Man in Grey* is of the noble class, but poor, and is shown to be complacent and lazy:

Mrs Min's only son, the head of the house, a long, lean man who had 'eaten rice for twenty-six years,' had never in his life earned any money, being a 'gentle-man' born and bred, though the only thing he had to show for it was a long, fine, white nail on each fourth finger, great sign of gentility.¹²³

The author's disapproval of her character is underlined by his ignorant dismissal of women and denial of their capacity for leadership:

When Mr. Min arrived at the meeting room one day, and found the man in grey absent, and the wife in charge, with a teacher to help, his disgust knew no bounds. 'Women ought to keep silence at home and in the churches,' quoth he, *sotto voce*, never having yet read the Scriptures, but speaking from an indignant heart.¹²⁴

In *Daybreak in Korea*, Baird is fiercely critical of the abuse of power by officers of the noble class. Among these is a magistrate who refuses to arrange the removal of a

¹²² *Ibid.* 255-256.

¹²³ See *The Man in Grey*, 10.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.* 32.

decomposing corpse unless he receives a bribe from the villagers, who are already struggling to survive.¹²⁵

Underwood is also critical of behaviour among the *yangban*, based directly on her own experience. One day the Reverend Underwood came across an abandoned child, Pon Gabe; no more than four years old, the boy was sick and weak with hunger.¹²⁶ It turned out that the child's father was a noble man of high rank, but had been banished for political reasons, and the mother was dead. Pon Gabe's *yangban* relatives had forsaken him and refused to take responsibility for his care. Consequently Pastor Won (Reverend Underwood) took him to his own home, and the missionary couple adopted the child.¹²⁷

While the examples above are all of *yangban* men, so too the missionary narratives show women of the noble or middle classes in a mainly negative light. The authors are less interested in the affluent life styles of the noble ladies, so different from the living conditions of the lower classes, than they are in the bad behaviour of such women. For example, Lady Na, in the short story 'Mittome' in *Kim Su Bang*, is 'unmerciful' and cruel in her treatment of Mittome; she is also unmannered and inelegant, as demonstrated through her behaviour during the church service.¹²⁸

In the character of Mrs Chang in Wagner's *Pokjumie* we find a more nuanced picture. In her favour, she conveys the gospel to her only daughter Agie, and asks her husband not to worship devils after her death.¹²⁹ However, our first impressions are hardly positive, for:

A glance at the rich dress and small, clear-cut features served to prove her of high class. Her attitude as she stood in the doorway and watched the servants was one of utter indifference and coldness... This woman of some thirty years was the first wife of Chang Tab Young. Ever since she was brought here a bride, twenty years of age, she had been striving to attain the perfect dignity and poise prescribed as the requisite of a high-class Korean lady. Instead of poise she had attained an icy indifference to all about her, which was the cause of great fear and at the same time of unbounded admiration on the part of the servants.¹³⁰

Mrs Chang's indifference to her servants means that they have no defence against the arbitrary ill treatment meted out by Mr Chang. For example, when Mr Chang gives orders that the servant 'Ash Girl' is to be beaten, because she has overheard her master raging when he thought himself alone, Mrs Chang responds to Agie's compassion for the servant by saying, 'My child, how often have I told you that, as the daughter of Chang Tab Young

¹²⁵ See *Daybreak in Korea*, 17.

¹²⁶ Underwood, *With Tommy Tompkins in Korea*, 62.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.* 61, 63.

¹²⁸ Wagner, 'Mittomi' in *Kim Su Bang*, 62.

¹²⁹ Wagner, *Pokjumie*, 52-54.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.* 21-22.

and as the future daughter-in-law of the illustrious Kang family, you must learn that only dignity and self-control are becoming in a lady?’¹³¹ To this Agie retorts: ‘You never care for anything but being proper, and I don’t want to be a lady ever - no, not ever.’¹³²

Clearly, the ‘cynical’ Mrs Chang, concerned only with her position as a ‘lady’, is not presented as an ideal model for Choson womanhood. Is Wagner’s apparent disregard for this intelligent, refined, native Korean noblewoman intentional?

Indeed, as shown above, the female missionary authors seem to hold the *yangban* class Koreans generally in fairly low regard. Certainly they choose not to present *yangban* women as role models, and appear not to recognize the efforts of indigenous women in the cause of emancipation and equal rights.

Even in the case of Mrs Kim in Wagner’s *Kumokie*, while the author presents her in a highly positive light, nevertheless, she certainly does not suggest her as a role model for women’s emancipation. This character, the mother of Noch Kyung, is an intelligent Confucian *yangban* lady, well-versed in the Chinese classics, who teaches the other women of the family to be familiar with the *eunmun*, the vernacular script,¹³³ thus emancipating them from illiteracy and ignorance. She has the respect of her son, who is proud to have such an intelligent mother,¹³⁴ and exercises leadership in her household. As Wagner tells us:

It is not always a fact even in Korea that man is the supreme ruler. Not so here, for it was my lady who ruled within the domain of this home ... Quiet and reserved, with unusual dignity, she seemed to come naturally by the right of control. The very qualities of decision and definite purpose so lacking in her lord were quite evident in her. Certainly he would not have made any such admission; nevertheless, this quiet little woman of refined manners was the head of the house.¹³⁵

One might imagine that Mrs Kim, a refined and intelligent woman, highly educated in her native country, would be a suitable role model for little Kumokie. Yet, it is notable that Wagner does not present her in this way. Whether or not this was a conscious decision on the author’s part, certainly it seems to suggest that Wagner did not recognize, or did not wish to draw attention to, the possibility that Korean women might bring about their own emancipation through their own efforts. Similarly, in *Pokjumie*, Wagner presents a female *yangban* character, the wife of Chang Tab Young, who is respected by her husband but nevertheless seems without any real potential as a leader of women seeking reform.

¹³¹ *Ibid.* 24.

¹³² *Ibid.* 24.

¹³³ Wagner, *Kumokie*, 147.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.* 126-127.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.* 25-26.

Certainly it seems that Wagner did not consider the Korean women of the higher social classes as possessing the qualities needed in a female role model.

5.5. *Yangban* women as possible models for equality and women's rights in Choson?

A review of the historical evidence suggests that Choson *yangban* women possessed qualities well-suited to a female role-model. Many were intelligent, and even well-educated. In fact, there was no prohibition against the education of women in Confucian Choson. There were, however, many obstacles. Women were not allowed to enter the 'formal' education institutions, such as *Sunggyungyan*, primarily due to *naeyoibub*, gender separation. While men were able to go out into the world to seek education, girls and women were expected to stay at home, filling their days with domestic tasks. Hence they had little time for study, and very limited access to education.¹³⁶ This situation is encapsulated in a saying of the Korean Confucian scholar Yi Yik (李穡, 1681-1763), who insisted that: 'It is not right if women neglect their silk farming and weaving and making clothes in order to study or read books (詩書).'¹³⁷ Yet the very fact that Yi Yik felt it necessary to make this pronouncement suggests that some women did pursue a life of study and did read books, thus 'neglecting' their designated domestic role. Indeed, there seem to have been a number of women involved in intellectual activities in 18th century, as suggested in the image of a painting entitled 'Dokseohaneun Yeo-in'¹³⁸['Woman reading'] in that time.

FIGURE 4 YOON DEOKHEE (1685-1776), 'DOKSEOHANEUN YEOIN'

¹³⁶See, Kim Eon Soon, 'Gaewhagi Yeosung Gyoyooke Naejaedoin Yoogyojuk Yeosungwan' [Confucian View of Women, Immanent in Women's Education in Enlightenment], *Peminizoom Yeongu* [Feminism Research], Vol. 10, issue 2 (Autumn, 2010), 55.

¹³⁷ See Yi Yik, (*Kukyeok*) *Sunghosaseol* [(Korean translation) 星湖僊說], 12 vols. compiled by National Culture Promotion Committee, (Seoul, 1977), Vol. 5, 145.

¹³⁸ Yoon Deokhee (1685-1776), 'Dokseohaneun Yeo-in' ['Woman reading'], The Museum of Seoul University.



For some higher class women, this would have been made easier because they had servants to carry out the household tasks. Others would read and study at night after they had completed the day's domestic labour, so fulfilling what was expected of them according to the Confucian norm. Indeed, in Choson, a woman could develop her intellectual life, as long as this was secondary to, and not at the expense of, her duties as mother, wife, and daughter-in-law.¹³⁹

The ultimate goal of traditional education in Confucian Choson was to enable individuals to develop their moral consciousness and thus become virtuous human beings, *seongingunja* (聖人君子), who would in turn provide the basis for the advancement and fulfilment of the Confucian society. It is important to note that women were not excluded from this quest to achieve the highest level of virtue. While we find no evidence that the Confucian male elites considered the possibility that women could become *seongingunja* in a 'formal' sense, it seems that some women, especially women of the Korean gentry, did seek to achieve this.¹⁴⁰ Most noble women were involved in intellectual activities, and they shared the same goals as men with regard to achieving virtue and a state of ideal human being. For example, Queen Sohe (1437-1504) in the preface to *Nehun*, a book of instruction for women, urged her female readership to 'engrave the teachings into your mind and bones day by day so that you may become *seongin*.'¹⁴¹

Yim Yoonjidang (任允摯堂 1721-1793) was one Choson noble woman who sought to become *seongin*. Despite the stark differences in what were considered the 'proper' roles of

¹³⁹ Kim Eon Soon, 'Choson Yeosungui Sunginjihyangui uimi' [The meaning of Choson Women's seeking to be Seongin (聖人)], *Hankuk Yeosung Chulhak* [Korea Women Philosophy], Vol. 12 (2009), 77-8.

¹⁴⁰ See Chung Heaen et al., *Momeuro bon Hankuk Yeosungsa*, [Korean Women's History through a Body Perspective] (Seoul, 2011), 161-163.

¹⁴¹ See Queen Sohe, *Naehun* [Instruction for women], preface[序], '汝等銘神刻骨, 日期於聖.' Translated and annotated by Yook Wan Jung (Seoul, 1984), 18.

men and women in the Confucian society, for Yim Yoonjidang men and women shared the same essential human nature. Consequently, if men could be *seongin*, then so too could women: ‘Although I am a woman, the naturally endowed nature as a human being is the same as for men. Even though I may not be reaching someone like the disciple of Confucius, I deeply desire to be *seongin*.’¹⁴²

Further, according to Yim Yoonjidang, a person who does not strive to become *seongin* ‘by cultivating morality of learning and studying’, is ‘like one who gives up their whole life itself’.¹⁴³ This applied to women just as much as it did to men.

Kang Jungildang (1772-1832) was also greatly concerned with the possibility that women could become *seongin*.¹⁴⁴ She recognized the lack of education for women in Choson society, and believed that this was due to parents; by failing to value their daughters highly, they contributed to a situation in which women were considered inferior to men. Jungildang emphasized the need for women’s education, since women, just as much as men, needed to learn how to live in the right way, in order to become *seongin*.¹⁴⁵

Thus it seems that some Choson women, especially those of the *yangban* class,¹⁴⁶ did strive to cultivate personal morality, and to develop themselves as models of ideal humanity, beyond the limit of womanhood. In doing so, they may have offered indigenous models for Choson women, and a basis for positive change.

¹⁴² See *YimYoonjidang: Korean translation version, Yoonjidang Yoogo* 允摯堂遺稿 [Yim Yoonjidang’s Posthumous Work], <克己復禮爲仁說>, trans. Youngchun Yi, (The city of Wonju, 2001) “噫! 我雖婦人,而所受之性,則初無男女之殊. 縱不能學顏淵之所學,而慕聖之志則切切...” (159).

¹⁴³ *Ibid.* 246.

¹⁴⁴ See *Kang Jungildang’s Posthumous Work* [靜一堂遺稿], especially <附尺牘>, 573-579. In 韓國文集叢刊 [Korea Anthology Collection] (Seoul: 韓國古典翻譯院 [Institute for the Translation of Korean Classics], 2011), 111.

¹⁴⁵ “人之壽夭窮達,有命焉.爲父母者,信世俗之語,以教女子讀書爲大忌,故婦女往往全不識義理,甚可笑也.” *Ibid.*, 579.

¹⁴⁶ See Kim Hyeonjai 金浩然齋 (1681-1722), 浩然齋遺稿 [*Kim Hyeonjai’s posthumous work*], <無題> ...閨中兒女不得歡,濟世安民何足求. Kim claims that the tasks of rescuing the world and comforting its people had typically been considered as belonging to men, and women were not given opportunities to participate in politics. However, she implies that if the world is truly to be saved, then women as well as men must participate in this work. (Kim Soon Chun, ‘Chosonhugi Jisikinui Jucheinsik Yangsang’ [Research on women intellectuals’ understanding of their being a subject in the latter part of Choson], (PhD thesis, Danguk University in Seoul, 2009), 24. See also Kim Samuidang 金三宜堂 (1769-1823), <和夫子詩>, who emphasizes equality between husband and wife and claims that marriage is the starting point for both partners to progress equally to become *sungin*. (See 三宜堂 金婦人 遺稿 [*Kim Samuidang’s posthumous work*], translated and annotated by Kim Weolyoung (Seoul, 2004), 28.

In conclusion, the female missionary authors show in their narratives their concern regarding the situation of Korean women. However, most of the main Korean women characters in the narratives are of the lower classes, while women of the higher classes are either not represented at all, or are shown in a negative light. There are no Korean female role models, and no recognition of indigenous efforts towards female emancipation or equality with men. While it remains unclear whether this failure to recognize the role models already existing in Korea was intentional or not, we have to conclude that for the female missionary authors, the women of Choson could be 'rescued' only through the efforts and example of the recently arrived, predominantly male, western Christians.

Chapter 6. 'Unaltered' Women Missionaries?

The female missionary narratives reveal how the westerners fought against the Confucian abasement of women, but give little hint of the changes undergone by the women missionaries themselves. Yet despite the traditional 'restrained' image presented in the narratives, there is evidence to suggest that the encounter between the female missionaries and Korean women impacted on the lives of all those involved. For the western female missionaries, this was manifested in their transcending the limits and restraints of Victorian domestic womanhood, although the exact nature and degree of the changes were different for each woman.

6.1. Personal Challenges in the Mission Field

As demonstrated in previous chapters, the Woman's Work for Woman project sought to transmit to Korean women the Victorian ideal and values of domestic womanhood. However, for the western women in the mission field, it was not always possible to adhere to this ideal. They faced challenging environments, both physically and psychologically, and often had to act independently, a situation that certainly did not align with gender roles according to the Victorian ideal.

We find evidence for these challenges in first hand reports from the western women missionaries. Lillias Underwood mentions the following examples:

Miss Samuels who spends her winters travelling on horseback over the terrible mountain roads of the North, holding classes in the hungry village ... Mrs Grierson, a timid little lady who for months holds the fort alone, the only foreigner in her far Northern home with her little ones only for company, hundreds of Li from missionaries while her husband journeys from group to group over a great territory ... Miss Davis who forded an icy cold stream and walked all day in drenched garments, in a chilling wind to keep an appointment with her class...¹

Indeed, the very nature of mission in a strange land seems to have made it inevitable that female missionaries would have been exposed to experiences and conditions well beyond those met by most Victorian women.

The experience of Ellasue Wagner offers ample evidence for the challenges experienced by the missionary women. In 1904, at the beginning of her mission, she was a single woman of 23 years old. After some uncertainty as to whether she would be sent to Korea or whether, owing to the dangers posed by the war between Russia and Japan, she would instead go to

¹ See Lillias Underwood, 'Woman's Work in Korea', *The Korea Mission Field* (April, 1913), 94-96.

China, she sailed first to Shanghai and from there to Chemulpo in Korea, on a ship staffed entirely by German officers and Chinese cabin boys; she was the only English speaker on the boat, and the only woman.² Upon her arrival at Chemulpo there was no pier, and high tides meant that the boat could not get close to the beach. Eventually she was carried to dry land with the help of two Korean labourers.³

Wagner's first appointment then was to the Songdo girls' school, which then had 12 Korean girl pupils. Here she found another challenge that there were 'No building; no faculty; no equipment; no books; nothing', but nevertheless Wagner 'was determined that even though we had so little to begin with we would have a school for those dear, trusting girls - and have a school we did!'⁴

Learning the Korean language also proved a major difficulty for Wagner. Her teacher was Pak Tab Yung, who spoke not one word of English. Wagner would have to take the initiative, asking questions, such as, 'What is this thing?' He would give her the name of the article, and she would repeat it one hundred times. Writing about this later she noted that, 'When I remember those days it is painful even now, and I wonder how one ever learned to speak under such circumstances.'⁵

Learning the Korean language was not the only one difficulty in her early mission days in Korea. When, in her first winter in Songdo, Wagner became ill with a serious bronchial infection, she too faced a situation in which there was no medical treatment available locally, and she was forced to travel to Seoul to receive the care she needed. This was a journey of about two days, and because the other missionaries were too busy to accompany her, she travelled with a Korean Christian parishioner, Kim Ke Tai, who was to take charge of the chair carriers. Ke Tai did not know a word of English, and Wagner still had very little Korean. They started their journey right after midnight, so that they could arrive at Seoul before the following night, and so avoid having to break the journey at an inn. It was the rain season, and the chair carriers had to struggle through floods, walking through water that

² Ellasue Wagner, *Korea Calls: Pioneer Days in the Land of Morning Calm* (Bristol, TN: 1948), 5.

³ *Ibid.* 5-9.

⁴ *Ibid.* 23-24.

⁵ *Ibid.* 29. While the process of learning the Korean language was a 'discouraging' one, Wagner seems to have gained relief from spending time with Newton, the baby son of the missionary couple Mr Mrs Cram, who lived in another apartment in the same building. However, the baby became sick and, with no medical personnel on hand, and a consequent delay in gaining the right treatment, on March 22, 1905, Newton died. This tragedy brought home to Wagner the necessity of accessible medical services, and she later wrote that 'If I had my training to take over again I would surely have chosen the field of medicine, for the man who can relieve pain and defy death itself has not only the opportunity to serve humanity... but also... a key to unlock the doors of prejudice and to let in the Lord of life and love.' (40)

was waist high. As night was coming on the rain ceased, but around midnight the group was faced with the sight of hundreds of people coming over the crest of the mountain, bearing torches and lanterns and making a clamour with drums, bells, and gongs. Wagner thought it must be an uprising, and told later that ‘My heart was filled with horror, and an unutterable longing for my dear homeland and for my mother swept over my heart. Had my time come to go?’⁶ Her attempts to find out from Ke Tai what was happening were baffled by their lack of a common language. It later turned out that what they had witnessed was a ceremony of mourning for a local nobleman.

Wagner’s novel *Pokjumie* seems to have contain similar scenes of a single woman missionary in extraordinary circumstances. This novel, apparently based on the author’s own experiences, relates how the woman missionary leads an evangelical tour into unfamiliar territory, even without the male protector or chaperone that would be expected according to the Victorian model of womanhood; she was accompanied only by a Korean Bible woman and a local Korean crew. She meets many challenges, for example in the figure of coolie Cho, who has detained Pokjumie and views the western woman with hatred and suspicion.⁷ To cope with situations such as these, Wagner would have been forced to show courage, determination, independence and autonomy in leadership to go through.

As for Jean Perry, by the time Jean Perry became a missionary, she had already endured personal tragedy. Having moved with her parents from England to Queensland, Australia, she had to cope first with the ill health of her parents, and then their death. In 1891 she was appointed by the Presbyterian Women’s Missionary Board in Australia, and travelled to Pusan, Korea with the Reverend James H. Mackay and his wife Mrs Mackay, Miss Menzies and Miss Fawcett, arriving sometime in 1892. The group however were unable to find anywhere suitable to stay, and spent the cold winter in poor and inadequate accommodation, in an area where cholera and other diseases were prevalent. During that time Mrs Mackay fell ill with pneumonia, and died.⁸

Perry’s health was also proved to be a challenge. Under the burden of strenuous work, she succumbed to typhoid fever. After a spell in hospital she returned to her endeavours too soon, and had a second attack of typhoid within two years. In 1903 she made another trip to

⁶ *Ibid.* 43-44.

⁷ Wagner, *Pokjumie*, 69.

⁸ Then, Perry and her group stayed for a while at the house of Dr Robert A. Hardie, a medical missionary, where the Reverend Baird and his wife Annie Baird were also staying. See Kim Eunha, ‘The independent missionaries Jean Perry and Ellen Pash’s education activities in 1890-1910’, 教育問題研究 [*The Journal of Research in Education*], vol.37 (July, 2010), 7.

Australia, where she spent time recovering from the second attack of typhoid,⁹ and in 1905 was in England, following a doctor's advice that she 'must not return to live in a native house.'¹⁰ However, after her participation in a 'Keswick convention', where Perry was asked to speak about her experience in Korean mission, she received a fresh call from Korea and returned there for further years of service.¹¹

Perry's another challenge came with her dealing with a Korean man. As described in *Chilgoopie the Glad*, Perry lived on site at the home for destitute children which she ran with Ellen Pash. Although usually the two women would have been together, it appears that Perry was alone when she had to face a difficult decision with regard to Ko, a young Korean man. Before coming out into the mission field she had been instructed 'When any of the men appeal to you, pass them on to the brethren, for much misunderstanding has been brought about by women thinking their work to be among both sexes,'¹² but with no male missionary in the neighbourhood Perry followed the religious calling encapsulated in the question, 'Who is my neighbour?' Confronted by this young man, starving and clad in filthy garments, she offered him the hospitality of a Korean home. In doing so she broke the mission rule of 'Woman's Work for Woman', according to which she was authorized to deal only with women and children,¹³ and in following her conscience exhibited independence of thought and action quite at odds with Victorian expectations of womanhood.

As for Lillias Underwood, it appears that Lillias Underwood suffered frequently due to illness. For example, she spent the winter of 1894 in confinement due to rheumatism and fever.¹⁴ In 1900, while on an evangelical tour with her husband, the Reverend Underwood, the couple stayed for a while at Sorai. There she held Bible classes for the women, and every morning she led a singing service for the children, but after a few days she was confined to her bed with an attack of pleurisy. Barely recovered, she received news of the death of the missionary Mr Gifford, and had to hurry back to Seoul.¹⁵ Underwood also

⁹ An advertisement for her fundraising meetings was published in the *Brisbane Courier* (30 August 1904), 3.

¹⁰ Perry, *Twenty Years a Korea Missionary* (London: 1911), 21.

¹¹ *Ibid.* 24.

¹² Perry, *Chilgoopie the Glad*, 24.

¹³ *Ibid.* 24-25.

¹⁴ See Mrs Underwood's Personal Report, Dec. 1894. In *Horace G. Underwood Papers II*, ed. and trans. by Yi Man Yeon and Oak Sung Deuk (Seoul, 2006), 504.

¹⁵ See the Report on Medical and Evangelical Work by Mrs H.G. Underwood for 1900. In *Horace G. Underwood Papers II*, ed. and trans. by Yi Man Yeon and Oak Sung Deuk (Seoul, 2006), 644. See also *Fifteen Years Among the Top-knots*, 229 on her illness at Sorai, where she 'recovered when that result seemed most unlikely, through God's answer to the prayers of our native Christians, one of whom, Mrs Kim, spent the whole night in prayer for me.'

shared in the identity struggle of her son, Tommy Tompkins, who was born in Korea in 1890. The boy's parents were American, although his father the Reverend Underwood had been born in London and his mother Lillias was of Dutch heritage, but as a missionary child he was looked down upon by his contemporaries in the United States, who called him 'chinky' (Chinaman).¹⁶

Dealing with the matters of her own children and their education, Annie Baird also appears to have gone through some difficulty due to the lack of teacher for her own children's education in the mission field. Baird was needed to solve it on her own, eventually bringing in an American teacher, Miss Ogilvy; this led to the foundation of a small school for the missionary children, which was to grow into the Pyongyang Foreign School.¹⁷

Annie Baird's health was also a big challenge as she herself suffered serious illness. In 1908 she was diagnosed with cancer, and over the next few years underwent a series of medical treatments. The cancer recurred in the summer of 1914 and she received radium therapy at Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore. However, in the summer of 1915, another round of treatment in the United States ended in failure, and she made the decision to face death in Korea, rather than America, 'not to cause her husband to leave the work, the Cause, the Crusade, which had given ultimate meaning to both their lives.'¹⁸

One of the most immense challenges for the missionary wives seems to be that they left alone to 'hold the fort' at the mission station while their husbands were away. As for Underwood, Underwood's husband was often absent, engaged on mission business away from home, and Lillias found herself having to cope alone in a foreign land.¹⁹ Although she was a strong advocate of women's equality with men, it seems that her marriage was a traditional one, with her husband as the controlling and authoritative figure.²⁰ In his absence, not only did she lack this 'leadership', but her anxiety for her husband's safety meant that she experienced enormous struggles and difficulties. Not least of these was the anxiety they felt for their husbands, as also shown in *Uncle Mac the Missionary*; Amy tells her husband, the missionary Mr Bright, that the only way she can bear it is to put her trust in God:

¹⁶ Underwood, *With Tommy Tompkins*, 64.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* 72-73.

¹⁸ Richard H. Baird, *William M. Baird of Korea: A Profile* (Seoul: 1968), 86. Annie Baird's funeral service was attended by a great many Korean people, not least from the churches of Pyongyang. Her son Richard Baird later wrote that during his own stay in Korea as a missionary, he more than once met Koreans who told him they had been at his mother's funeral; some even said that they had been coffin bearers.

¹⁹ Underwood, *Underwood of Korea*, 105-106.

²⁰ Underwood, *With Tommy Tompkins*, 17.

There are times when the country trips have to be taken, and you go off with your head high in the air, and your feet deep in the snow, and your wife puts a shawl round her shoulders... and we [Amy and their child William] wave and wave till you turn the corner of the road. Then comes my turn, for William runs back to his toys contentedly when told 'Daddy's coming back soon', but he does not know what a jump my heart gives when anyone comes suddenly to the door, lest it should be word that something has gone wrong with daddy... I could never, never let you away among all the unknown ills of the country, with no one to look after you should you fall sick, unless I knew *He* cares.²¹

While the male missionaries were away on their evangelical tours, their wives were often expected to keep the missionary station going. As shown in *The Man in Grey*, for example, in the absence of her husband the missionary wife was responsible for leading prayer meetings and other gatherings, even mixed gatherings at the church. Annie Baird seems to have faced similar challenges, when her husband the Reverend William Baird was away 'on a series of evangelizing trips among the villages in the country round about.'²² Far worse, however, she had to endure the death of two children in the mission field in Korea; her first daughter, Nancy Rose, died in 1894, and she lost her son, Arthur Faris Baird, in 1903. These experiences appear to have helped her to become more sympathetic to Korean women as mothers and wives. When she comforted a Korean woman whose two-year-old grandchild had died, it was as if the cultural divide had ceased to exist, at least for the moment, for:

I, too, knew what it was to long unspeakably for the weight of a dear little body and the pressure of a warm little head on my breast, and to listen for the patter of baby feet where there was only silence. So I could sympathize with her. She was dirty and ill smelling, and I, to her, a person of uncanny complexion and of strange race, but as we wept in each other's arms we were conscious only of our common motherhood.²³

Such challenges, accepted willingly or otherwise, must have demanded great reserves of courage and fortitude, and while the women must sometimes have been discouraged, perhaps they also found such experiences exhilarating. Despite the difficulties and hardships, they were gaining opportunities to grow and learn, to exercise independence and freedom, which would have been unheard of for most western women of that period. As a result, it seems that women missionaries developed qualities of pioneering leadership,²⁴ which might also have served as models for the Korean women to whom they ministered.²⁵

²¹ Perry, *Uncle Mac the Missionary*, 123-125.

²² See Baird's letter to Gussie, dated April 12, 1894. Record Group 172-1-2, Philadelphia: The Presbyterian Historical Society.

²³ Annie Baird, *Inside Views of Mission Life* (Philadelphia, 1913), 128.

²⁴ Lulu Frey, a single female missionary, also appears to have gone through many personal difficulties. Letters written by her in the summer of 1894 tell of her need to go to Japan due to health concerns.

6.2. New Experiences - Beyond the Victorian Ideal

Lulu Frey was an American woman missionary appointed to Korea during the late Choson period. In a letter to her father dated September 27, 1893, she reveals her feelings when asked on the boat to preach to 200 Japanese passengers, labourers returning to Japan from Honolulu, saying that she:

did not dare refuse yet I promised with some fear... One of the young men interpreted ... as I preached my first sermon to a heathen audience. They evidently thought it a good thing to do. ... It seems a queer way to talk to people but the young men seem to think more can be accomplished through the foreigners speaking than through their MINISTERS.²⁶

At home, the western women missionaries would have few if any opportunities to stand at the podium to preach. Yet here, we see Frey being invited to do so, and we can imagine that this might have given her some sense of fulfilment,²⁷ perhaps even a sense of authority over the eastern men who sat before her on the boat and listened to her speak. Similarly, in Choson, the encounter between western female missionaries and the native Choson people might have led the missionaries to feel a sense of privilege and authority.²⁸ Ellasue Wagner, one of our focus authors, also had a similar experience when she was called upon to teach Namsannie (meaning 'South Mountain'), a Korean young man of 18 years old, how to cook.²⁹ As she had spent much of her time before coming to Korea in studying, and although her mother was a good cook, Wagner herself had never learned. Yet with some help from Mrs Cram and her Korean cook, Wagner managed to teach the Korean young

Subsequently, owing to the war between Japan and China, she was stuck in Japan with other missionaries from China, Japan and Korea, and wrote that she felt almost like a 'refugee'. However, she overcame these difficulties to become a prominent leader in women's education in the early 20th century in the mission field in Korea. (Frey letters from copies in the author's archive.)

²⁵ Induk Pahk (1896-1980) studied at Ewha, the school founded by the missionary F. Scranton, and in 1928 graduated from Columbia University, where she had majored in social science. She was a strong supporter of the Korean women's rights movement, and worked as an educator and social worker in Korea. She records in her autobiography the 'tremendous impression' made on her life by Lulu E. Frey, and notes that 'the idea of establishing a college for Korean women was hers. She had vision, strong convictions, and the verve for executing a definite plan.' (Induk Pahk, *September Monkey*, Harper & Brothers, New York, 1954, 54.)

²⁶ Lulu Frey's letter to her father, dated September 27, 1893 (copy in the author's archive).

²⁷ See Kang Sunmi, Hankukui Keundai Chogi Feminism Yeongu [*Study on the Rise of Feminist Consciousness at the Turn of the 20th Century in Korea*], 209-210.

²⁸ Women missionaries were granted many privileges, including extra-territorial rights as foreigners, and they were not subject to Korean law. During times of political turmoil, including the Japanese-Chinese war (1894) and Japanese-Russian war (1904), many Choson people sought security on the foreign missionaries' land and in their houses.

²⁹ Wagner, *Korea Calls*, 27.

man, Namsannie, almost as if she herself were a master of the art of cookery. As shown above, the women missionaries exercised leadership in the mission field, not only with the native women, but occasionally also with the native men. In *The Man in Grey*, we read how the Choson nobleman Mr Min finds himself under the leadership of the missionary wife, Mrs Bright, when she takes charge of the mixed gathering of believers in the absence of her husband.³⁰ It seems that the honour and respect these missionary women received from the native Korean people, women and men, helped to relieve the burden upon them, offsetting the sense of women's inferiority to men imposed by the gender hierarchy both at home and in the Missionary Society.

Mattie Noble provides further evidence for the disparity between the experience at home and that in the mission field. She writes³¹ how, in America, she had never felt that she had any talent for singing or music, but in Korea she was required to sing and lead the music with the Korean women, and was surprised to find herself complimented on her gift for singing. This gave her a sense of achievement that she could never have known had she stayed at home in America.

As for Annie Baird, it came with her career as a writer. She may have chosen a career as a writer if she not married a missionary, nevertheless did develop her literary and linguistic talents, writing books such as *Daybreak in Korea* and *Inside Views of Mission Life*. Her *Fifty Helps for the Study of the Korean Language* was the standard textbook for missionaries heading to Korea. From 1911 to 1913, Baird conducted a Korean language school for a month or two each spring for newly arrived missionaries,³² and she also translated American textbooks into Korean for use in the Soongsil college. A member of the Hymnbook Committee, she translated and adapted some hymns, including 'meolli meolli gakdeoni',³³ which provided much comfort to the people of Korea through times of trouble and tragedy, as when Queen Min, the 'mother of Choson', was murdered. Baird came to Korea as a missionary wife, but she was able to fulfil herself, beyond the Victorian Ideal, as a writer, translator, adapter, and, above all, an excellent teacher. She was much sought after as a Bible teacher and speaker for women's training classes, she held a Thursday afternoon

³⁰ Perry, *The Man in Grey*, 32.

³¹ See Mattie Wilcox Noble's Dairy, *Journals of Mattie Wilcox Noble, 1892-1934* (Seoul: Institute of Korean Church History Study, 1993), 48.; see also Kang Sunmi, *Hankukui Keundai Chogi Feminism Yeongu [Study on the Rise of Feminist Consciousness at the Turn of the 20th Century in Korea]*, 212.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ This hymn was originally based on William McDonald's (1820-1901) 'I am Coming to the Cross', but the lyric of Baird's version (1895), titled 'I have wandered far indeed', resonated particularly with the Korean people facing difficult times and political turmoil.

Bible class for women in 'Sa Ch'ang Dong Church', and she served on the board of directors (often as chair) of 'the Soong Eui Girls' Academy,'³⁴ thus influencing people across the country.

As for Jean Perry, she also received recognition in the mission field that she could never have achieved at home. The local people called her a 'doctor lady', even though she had only given a 'simple' medical treatment to Ko's burned hand, applying the wonderful 'yak' (medicine) she had learned about as a novice missionary.³⁵ As she was applying the outer bandage to Ko's hand, the Korean people around praised her, saying, 'Chai-goo[joo] manso', meaning 'much ability, or greatly talented.'³⁶

As shown above, despite the challenges they faced, and the tensions between the Victorian notion of separate spheres and domesticity and the actual conditions in the mission field, it appears that in these new and foreign environments the women missionaries were able to grow, broadening their perspectives beyond the ideal of Victorian womanhood, while affirming their leadership and authority over the local people in Korea.

6.3. Western Female Missionaries and their Personal Transformation

Despite the 'restrained' image of western female missionaries presented in the narratives, it seems that through Woman's Work for Woman the female missionaries underwent changes in their own identity, such that they became transformed. The encounter between the women missionaries and the native Korean women triggered a journey of self-emancipation for the missionaries, albeit that this might have been unintended and unlooked for. In their cultural encounter, both the female missionaries and the Korean women acted as agents of influence and change and, as a result, it seems that the influence was a mutual one, so that both groups experienced change.

6.3.1. Annie Baird

Baird's narrative *Daybreak in Korea* does not include much reflection on her life as a female missionary. This may be partly because her purpose in writing the stories, all based on what she has observed in the mission field in Korea, is to demonstrate 'the power

³⁴ Richard H. Baird, *William M. Baird of Korea*, 85.

³⁵ Perry, *Chilgoopie the Glad* (London: 1906), 36.

³⁶ *Ibid.* 40.

of transformation of the gospel³⁷ over the Korean people. For example, Baird's message for her character Pobai is clear, that Pobai's conversion is to bring transformation and emancipation to her. Well, then, was it only the Korean women who experienced such emancipation? What about the female missionaries? Did not they too undergo changes brought about by their Woman's Work for Woman? Can we find any evidence of alteration on the part of Annie Baird?

Baird's mission work can be divided into three stages. She began her life in mission in 1891, in Pusan. Then, she and her husband the Reverend William Baird worked for a short time in Daigu, where they opened a new mission station, and in 1896-7 they were in Seoul. However, the third stage of her mission life was the longest; she was in PyengYang, in the north of Korea, from 1897 until her death in 1916.

In the earliest years of her mission, it seems that Annie Baird was somewhat condescending in her view of Korean culture, and Korean girls in particular. As she wrote in a letter to 'Gussie':

I wish you could have been with me the first Sunday I was here, at their little Sunday School. There were about a dozen of them, ranging in years from four to fourteen, all in little red jackets reaching just below their armpits, and long red skirts reaching to the floor... it would make you crawl to see some of their food, soured boiled beans, for instance, in great mouldy, rotten looking lumps, nobody knows how old.³⁸

In the same letter Baird gives her first impressions of Korean houses as 'queer native' buildings, with 'walls of mud plaster and roofs of great beams and poles overlaid with clay and rough tiles, and projecting in eaves a yard wide. The inside walls are mostly of tough paper stretched on either side of a slight wooden frame, and much of the flooring is of stone heated by a large fire underneath.'³⁹ At the end of the letter Baird writes, 'Give my love to the Junior Endeavor girls... I shall not soon forget their earnest prayers. I often think of their happy lot in contrast with the girls of this country.'⁴⁰

In another letter to Gussie, dated April 12, 1894, three years after the one just quoted, Baird describes the Korean 'amah' (children's nurse) she has hired. Baird had taught the amah to read her own language, and she had made excellent progress, learning in about a month. But then, to Baird's surprise, she finds that the amah, like all Korean women, is entirely

³⁷ Baird, *Daybreak in Korea*, 5.

³⁸ Annie Baird's letter to Gussie in March 6, 1891 from Seoul, Korea. Record Group 172-1-2, Philadelphia: The Presbyterian Historical Society.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

convinced that ‘she has no sense.’⁴¹ Here Baird points out Korean women’s low self-esteem and lack of self-respect.

However, these views on Korean women seem to have changed over the years, albeit subtly.

In *Inner Views of Mission Life*, published in 1913, we read:

Sometimes it takes years for us to comprehend what living epistles we are to our adopted people. Every look, word and action is noted, commented on, repeated to others, and often, perhaps, misconstrued. A woman patient, grateful for treatment received, brings a present of eggs to the woman physician. The doctor, knowing the patient’s poverty, deprecates the gift, and allows a troubled frown to overspread her countenance. The poor woman, anxiously scanning her face, reads there only discontent with the meagre offering, and slinks away, chilled and hurt.⁴²

Here, Baird seems to recognize the deep-rooted self-respect of poor Korean women, however much appearances might suggest low self-esteem. Pointing out the danger of ‘missionary temptations’, especially the tendency to assume lordship over Koreans, Baird writes:

It is so easy for us to arrive on the field firm in the conviction that we are conferring a great favour on the natives to come at all, and so from the start assuming an attitude of condescension. As a matter of fact, the people have done without us for some hundreds of years, and a good many of them still think that they could continue to do so. It was not the call of the heathen that brought us to the mission but the call of Christ.⁴³

Thus it seems that through her experiences teaching and studying the Bible with Korean women, Baird came to a new understanding of them. In fact, her views began to change much earlier. In the years around 1900 Baird led a training class for Korean country women; it lasted for ten days and during that time it was necessary for the pupils to stay in the city. She later wrote how she and her missionary colleague, Mrs Graham Lee, had ‘very little idea how many [Korean women] to expect, or what discouragements we might encounter...if six women should come we would consider the class a success.’⁴⁴ However, when she put the proposition to the Korean women of the city church that they should entertain the country women as their guests during the ten days of the class, she found that, despite their poverty, they showed their willingness to share and serve, and together pledged to entertain twenty visitors.⁴⁵ As Baird later recalled:

It was a pleasure that is with me yet to be at that meeting and hear the testimonies as the pledges were being made. One drew a graphic picture of Christ’s sufferings for us, and said it would be a pity if we could not deny ourselves to the extent of a little money in order that others might know more about him. One who had been redeemed from a long

⁴¹ Annie Baird’s letter to Gussie in April 12, 1894. Record Group 172-1-2, Philadelphia: The Presbyterian Historical Society.

⁴² Annie Baird, *Inside Views of Mission Life* (Philadelphia, 1913), 21.

⁴³ *Ibid.* 17.

⁴⁴ This general class for country women was held in PyengYang and lasted for ten days. It grew quickly year by year, so that after 13 years there were five hundred and thirty two women attending. (See *ibid.* 81).

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

lifetime of wickedness said, 'Here is a chance to do something pleasing to God and make ourselves more precious to him', and she sat down with tears streaming down her poor, sin-scarred face. Everybody had something to contribute and some word of praise to utter at the same time. Knowing how poor they all were from our standpoint, I had to wink hard to keep the tears back, and am not sure that I succeeded.⁴⁶

Baird also reports that twenty-four women came from far and wide to join in the class. Among them, two women walked a distance of 150 miles, which took a week; yet despite the fatigue of the long journey, they uttered no complaint. As one feeble and trembling old woman, who had also walked a long distance, said, 'I was very tired, but I am so glad to get here that I do not feel it.'⁴⁷

Baird also pays tribute to the sacrificial devotion of her Korean housekeeper, Yoon Ssi,⁴⁸ who had been left behind to do ironing and mending while the missionary family was away for their summer holiday. As she worked over the ironing board she collapsed, and for three days she lay prostrate with weakness and pain. However, the day before she died, she took up her mending again, saying that she would be able to finish the work before the missionary wife returned.

It was not just the devotion and charity of the Korean women that impressed Baird; she also expresses admiration for their talents and gifts in music, noting that, 'Mrs. Graham Lee told me that she never would feel discouraged again over the ability of the Koreans to learn to sing, because as she listened to the class - from the distance of her home, a few steps away - she had been able to recognize the tune quite easily at the end of the ten days!'⁴⁹

Of course, not all Korean women gained Baird's respect. For example, we learn of her troubles with Su Ssi, a Korean cook. Su Ssi received a monthly wage equivalent to 5 dollars, and was supposed to provide her own board at home. However, alerted by the sudden disappearance of various items, Baird became suspicious that Su Ssi was taking her food at the missionary place. Later, aware that she might have been wrong, and that the food could have been thrown away by mistake, she praises Su Ssi, noting that 'her hard working brown hands and those of her fellow servants and predecessors have relieved me of the household tasks that otherwise would have occupied all my time and strength.'⁵⁰ Nevertheless, recognizing that all humans can be easily tempted, Baird decided that henceforth she would put all extra food under lock and key, leaving out only enough for a day or two. She admits that 'This may seem distrustful and troublesome, but the strong probability is that it may

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* 82.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* 60-61.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* 64.

save me a lasting grief in the discovery that I have trained up a hardened thief.’⁵¹ At the same time, she acknowledges that all human beings are subject to temptation, including herself. She feels a heavy responsibility, for: ‘In a way I stand in the place of God to Su Ssi. He considers her frame and remembers that she is made of easily tempted dust - and so must I.’⁵²

Baird’s personal growth is clearly shown in her developed cultural understanding, in her seeking to encompass multiple perspectives, transcending the disparity between different cultures. She writes that to be a ‘good’ missionary one must see things from the view point of the missioned, for:

If we find ourselves inclined to regard the people with a trace of superciliousness, it may help us to look at ourselves for a moment from their standpoint. As we, the missionary in Korea, pass along, threading our way among heaps of unspeakable filth, we think, ‘Was ever anything more dreadful? What would mother say if she could see me now?’ Yet at least one Korean on attempting to make his home in New York City found the odours unendurable and came home.⁵³

In the same vein, Baird expresses her sympathy with Korean women, considering them as fellow participants in women’s communal consciousness. Rather than condescending, or behaving as a distant authority figure, she understands and communicates with the local women as a mother and a wife. For example, in Confucian society, being the mother of a male child brought great privilege, but the woman had to be prepared to feed the child at any time, by adjusting their style of dress. To a western woman, this may have been misread as damaging to the mother’s dignity.⁵⁴ Baird writes:

Until the introduction of Christianity one reason in Korean minds for the existence of women was the exercise of the maternal function. To be a mother was their one claim to consideration, and they were accustomed to dress in a way to present the least possible obstruction to the frequent nourishment of their little ones. The exposure that resulted was a never ending offense to a vigorous old lady from Kentucky who spent several years in Seoul..... and I used to wonder what these same women would have thought could they have seen a crowd of Southern or Northern ‘quality’ gathered together for an evening dance. What explanation would they have regarded as sufficient to account for the unseemly lack of attire and unheard of familiarity of the attitudes.⁵⁵

Here, Baird shows her considerable powers of empathy and excellent ability to look at a situation from another point of view. While keeping her own identity as an American woman she nevertheless accepts that, seen through the lens of another culture, the American way might appear questionable indeed.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.* 17-18.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* 19.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

It is notable that, as regards her role in mission work, Annie Baird held on persistently to the Victorian ideal of domestic womanhood. In an article published as early as 1895, she asks the question: 'Are [wives] a help or a hindrance to missionary work?'⁵⁶ and claims that 'a good wife ought to influence a good husband and a good husband ought to be neither afraid nor ashamed to be influenced by a good wife', so that the wife may help to 'accelerate the promotion of the missionary enterprise.'⁵⁷ Baird firmly believed that the role of the missionary wife was to be a helpmate to her husband, supporting him in his life-time commitment to the work of mission. She insists that: 'One determination should be fixed in the head of every missionary wife and that is that her husband's service is for life. Whatever illness or family cares may come to her even to withdrawing her permanently from the field, the years of his service shall not be shortened.'⁵⁸ Thus she makes clear that the missionary wife must always consider her own needs as secondary to those of her husband's higher calling. In her own case she fulfilled this role even through illness, and when she knew that her cancer was terminal she chose to spend her last days in Korea, at her husband's side; in that way she supported him, and his mission work, until the end.⁵⁹

It is clear that Baird gave much thought to her role as a mother in the mission field, and particularly to the issue of her children's education. For example, considering the problem of whether to send her children away to school, she asks:

To what extent are parents justified in shifting upon other people responsibility for the training and care of the children whom God has given them? Are the children likely to turn out well when left at a tender age in an institution or to the care of relatives perhaps not altogether in sympathy with the life work of the parents? Is it better, perhaps, for the mother to reside in America with the children, leaving the husband and father to work on for an indefinite period alone? Or shall both the parents suspend their missionary work for a term of years at least, in the expectation of being able to take it up later on?⁶⁰

Indeed, Baird saw the education and training of children as a mother's most important duties. This was in keeping with the Victorian ideal, and Baird leaves us in no doubt of her adherence to this ideal. She is clear in her insistence that: 'Home duties must ever come first to a mother.'⁶¹

⁵⁶ Annie Baird, 'The Relation of the Wives of Missionaries to Mission Work', *Korean Review* (November 1895), 416-20.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* 417.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* 419.

⁵⁹ See also Richard Baird, *William M Baird of Korea*, 83: 'Both as a wife and a missionary Mrs Baird was above all a helpmate...All her abilities were devoted primarily to aid her husband in "the work." It was her work as much as his, but his part in it always had first claim.'

⁶⁰ Baird, *Inside Views of Mission Life*, 52.

⁶¹ *Ibid.* 56.

However, Baird's belief that it is better for young children to remain with their parents, even in the missionary field, leads her to the question: 'Under what circumstances could it possibly be better to keep boys and girls to maturity in heathen rather than in Christian surroundings?'⁶² With this question in mind, and convinced of the importance of children's education, Baird determined to find a solution, and succeeded in making it an issue for all the missionary parents in Pyeng Yang. In doing so she exhibited leadership, listening to all the opinions expressed and finally taking it upon herself to bring a teacher from America, which led to the establishment of a school for the children of missionaries.⁶³

Baird herself was involved in education, and as teaching was one of the few roles outside the home that were considered proper to women, she was able to be active in this area without any questioning of the Victorian ideal of womanhood. One of the reasons why women were considered suitable as teachers was the assumption that they possessed 'moral excellence'; mothers would teach morality at home, and teaching as a profession was seen as an extension of the domestic sphere. Indeed, Catharine Beecher considered teaching to be the *only* appropriate role for women outside the home.⁶⁴ Moreover, in the 19th century school teachers earned very little, so it was perhaps not surprising that it was women who fulfilled that role, and took charge of education matters in the mission field.⁶⁵

Indeed, it appears that in her mission life at Pyeng Yang, Baird was extremely active in education. According to her mission report of 1901, she led Sunday morning Bible school with 200 present, a Wednesday prayer gathering with 30-40 people, and a Sunday afternoon class for the Sunday school teachers.⁶⁶ She also provided critical assistance to her husband the Reverend Baird in the Soong Sil Academy project in PyengYang, not least by translating many English texts and documents into Korean, to be used in the college.

In some respects, it seems that Annie Baird maintained conservative views with regard to women's role and rights. For example, in the Presbyterian Church, single women missionaries had full voting rights, but married women were denied the right to vote.

⁶² *Ibid.* 54.

⁶³ *Ibid.* 53.

⁶⁴ See Catharine E. Beecher, *Woman's Profession as Mother and Educator, with Views in Opposition to Woman's Suffrage* (Philadelphia: G. Maclean, 1872).

⁶⁵ See also Dr Rufus Anderson, 'Introductory Essay on the Marriage of Missionaries', in William Ellis, *Memoir of Mrs Mary Mercy Ellis, wife of Rev. William Ellis, Missionary in the South Seas, and Foreign Secretary of the London Missionary Society* (Boston: Crocker & Brewster, 1836), vii-viii. He wrote that the missionary wife's 'appropriate sphere' was 'within the domestic circle', but if her health allowed, she may also be expected 'to exert much influence in the department of education.'

⁶⁶ See Korea Mission Report of Pyeng Yang, 1901-1902. In Harry Andrew Rhodes, *History of the Korea Mission: Presbyterian Church U.S.A., 1884-1934* (Seoul, 1934), 157-158.

According to the *Minutes and Reports of the Annual Meeting of the Korea Mission of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.* (1904), the rules and by-laws stipulated that: ‘Members of the Mission shall be entitled to vote in both the Station and the Mission after one year of service in connection with the Mission and the passing of the language examinations appointed for the first year, except that married ladies shall not vote.’⁶⁷ In 1912 this position was changed, under a resolution stating that married women could exercise a vote ‘on condition of their passing the third year language test.’ Of course, this was a much stricter requirement than was imposed on men and single women. With regard to this issue Annie Baird stated that she did not see any special necessity for a debate upon the voting rights of married women.⁶⁸ She noted that for the majority of married women in the mission field the call to mission had come through their husbands, and most would spend a lot of time taking care of their children and their education. It may then not be unreasonable to set some special requirement to ensure that those who exercise the privilege of voting are qualified to do so. Baird concludes by urging her fellow missionaries to put aside any secular or ‘political’ interests,⁶⁹ including the matter of voting rights for married women, and to keep their focus on the Divine work they had been called by God to do.

Here, considering only the content of the article, we might conclude that Baird’s writing is conservative. However, it is important to bear in mind that *The Korea Mission Field* had a circulation of more than 10,000, and in expressing her opinions publicly to a wide readership Annie Baird was certainly not confining herself to the domestic sphere. However unintentional this discrepancy between her actual activities, and the ideal of Victorian domestic womanhood to which she subscribed, Baird was certainly not an ‘ordinary’ wife and mother.

In her work with and for Korean women and their emancipation, Annie Baird underwent great changes, and appears especially to have grown in cultural sensitivity and understanding, broadening her conception of female consciousness and community to include women in Korea and beyond. She had excellent language skills, demonstrated especially in her literary mission, carried out through the writing of many books and articles in English. In addition to the narratives and novels written in English for the readers at

⁶⁷ *Minutes and Reports of the Annual Meeting of the Korea Mission of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.*, (1904) : *Twentieth Annual Meeting of the Korea Mission of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.*, 87.

⁶⁸ Annie Baird, ‘Votes or Not for Married Women in Station and Mission’, *The Korea Mission Field*, 9, no.2 (1913), 35-37.

⁶⁹ See Catharine E. Beecher, *Woman’s Profession as Mother and Educator*, 183-184, 186. Beecher supported the Victorian ideal of womanhood and the notion of separate spheres for men and women, and claimed that it is not woman’s mission to exercise any political role, including in the women’s suffrage movement.

home, and the educational materials for fellow missionaries, she also wrote short novels in Korean, thus sharing her literary gift with Korean Christian readers. Before her marriage Baird had dreamt of a literary career. In her mission work in Korea and all that stemmed from it she perhaps went much further, becoming appreciated and praised as an international writer and speaker. Indeed, according to the Korean scholar, L. George Paik, ‘there may be no one like Mrs. Baird with her excellent talents and achievements in literature among women missionaries in Korea.’⁷⁰

6.3.2. Ellasue Wagner

Wagner’s mission work in Korea was focused on teaching and supervising in schools and educational social service institutions for women. In this, she was typical of many female missionaries; indeed, the work of education in the mission field was carried out and overseen largely by women. In Korea alone, in the late 19th and early 20th century female missionaries founded many schools and colleges for girls and women, such as Ewha (1886, Methodist, Seoul); Jungui (1894, Methodist, Pyeng Yang); Jungshin (1895, Presbyterian, Seoul); Ilshin (1895, Presbyterian, Dongrae); Youngwha (1897, Methodist, Incheon); Baewha (1898, Methodist, Seoul); Sungui (1903, Presbyterian, Pyeng Yang); Jungmyoung (1903, Presbyterian, Mokpo); Holston (1904, Methodist, Kesung); Jinsung (1904, Presbyterian, Wonsan); Bosung (1906, Presbyterian, Sunchun); Supia (1907, Presbyterian, Kwangju), and Shinmyoung (1907, Presbyterian, Taegu).⁷¹

Wagner began her missionary career in 1904, as a teacher and supervisor at the Songdo girls’ school. Although most of the 12 Korean pupils, ranging in age from seven to thirteen,⁷² lived close by, the Confucian custom that even the smallest girl must cover herself with long garments when out in public meant that it was easier for the students to board. Consequently the school, which was housed in a building that had once been used as a ginseng shed, was also home to the girls who studied there.

Under Wagner’s leadership the small school grew quickly. In 1906, 49 girls applied to join, but the school was not equipped to accommodate so many. It seems that Wagner drew on this experience in her short story ‘Toksunie’ in *Kim Su Bang*, in which Toksunie wants to get an education, but is told by the two female missionaries running the school that they

⁷⁰ See L. George Paik, *Hankuk Gaesinyosa: 1832-1910* [The history of Protestant Missions in Korea], 305.

⁷¹ See Son Insoo, *Hankuk Gewhagi Gyoyook Yeongu* [Research on education during the Korean Enlightenment period] (Seoul: Iljisa, 1980) 76-77.

⁷² Wagner, *Korea Calls*, 21.

lack the facilities to take more students.⁷³ Wagner felt that in order to meet the demand, a new school building was needed.⁷⁴ Thanks to donations offered by Dr Thomas F. Stanley and the women of the Holston Conference in the American Episcopal Methodist Church, South, a new three-storey stone building was erected, and the school became known as the Holston Institute. Wagner served as principal for many years, during 1906-1908, 1910-1914, 1916-1919, and later in 1938 until 1940, the year she returned to America, having been forced by the Japanese to leave Korea, providing a role model of professionalism and leadership for many Korean girls.

It is notable that, although Wagner was unmarried, and seems to have enjoyed much freedom and independence in her missionary career, her writings indicate that she held consistently to the Victorian norm of domestic womanhood, valuing above all a woman's role as mother and wife in a Christian home. This is shown particularly in *Pokjumie* (published in 1911), but also in *Kumokie*, published eleven years later. Indeed, Wagner dedicated *Kumokie* to her mother, 'whose love, self-denial, and steadfast faith in God have been a constant source of missionary inspiration.'⁷⁵

For Wagner, the purpose for the Holston Institute, in addition to training for the religious and spiritual life in Christian faith,⁷⁶ was to prepare women to be competent to 'meet the duties of life, and not only be able to teach others and to present the truth to those who do not know the way, but also that they may become successful home makers'.⁷⁷ She insisted that 'the student must not only study her books diligently but learn to make her own clothes, mend, cook, and keep the house in order',⁷⁸ and explained how, at the Holston Institute:

Several of the older girls have each a younger girl under her care, little orphans who are too young to sew for themselves, and it is the duty of the older girls to keep the clothes of their charges in order. We have as matron a splendid Korean woman who loves the girls and gives Saturday mornings to cutting out and fitting their clothes.⁷⁹

⁷³ See Wagner, 'Toksunie' in *Kim Su Bang*.

⁷⁴ Ellasue C. Wagner, 'The Girls' Boarding School, Song Do,' *The Korea Mission Field*, 3 (Sept.1907), 132-133.

⁷⁵ See the preface of *Kumokie*.

⁷⁶ Of course, the greatest emphasis was on the religious life. As of 1911-12, according to Wagner, 'We have students' prayer meetings and Sunday school in the school besides the regular church services. The teachers in the Sunday school are the girls in the High School Department, and they also teach in the afternoon Sunday school for children under fifteen.' Ellasue Wagner, *Second Annual Report of the Woman's Missionary Council of the Episcopal Methodist Church, South, for 1911-1912* (Nashville, TN: Publishing House of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1912), 268.

⁷⁷ Ellasue Wagner, *Second Annual Report of the Woman's Missionary Council of the Episcopal Methodist Church, South, for 1911-1912*, 269.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

However, while Wagner championed an ideal of domestic womanhood for her Korean girl pupils, she did not conform to that model herself. Most significantly, as a single missionary she enjoyed economic independence, which was highly unusual for a woman at that time.

Wagner was aware that her pupils did not share her economic advantages. Referring to the conditions in which many of the Korean girls lived, she noted that, 'in one tiny, bare room with a stone floor and almost no furniture, the mere living in a house like this and the work of housekeeping is an education in itself alone.'⁸⁰ Here, her concern for the economic standing of Korean women seems clear, and we find this concern reflected in her narratives. In the short story 'Mittome', the title character is sold as a maid to Lady Na, and can only escape the harsh terms of her servitude when a missionary pays for her to be set free.⁸¹ Similarly, in *Pokjumie*, coolie Cho holds a Korean girl captive, and a female missionary seeks to free her by 'paying off' Cho.⁸² In *Kumokie* (1922), Wagner draws on her experience in education; her missionary teacher character runs a school program that allows the students to work their way through by taking a year longer in the self-help department, which enables Kumokie to complete her education despite her financial concerns.⁸³

In order to help Korean girls achieve economic independence, Wagner introduced a program whereby the students could earn their board through domestic work. In her report for the year 1911-1912, Wagner records that: 'Two hours per week are devoted by each grade to needlework, such as crocheting, knitting, and embroidery. ... We had an exhibition of this work done during the fall term; shawls, caps, gloves, scarfs, bags, and various fancy articles, which were afterwards offered for sale.'⁸⁴ Wanting to address the problem of poverty as an obstacle to girls' education,⁸⁵ in 1915 Wagner created a 'self-help department', and by 1918, 30 out of 71 girl students belonged to the department, making handicrafts to sell in order to earn their school expenses.⁸⁶ Through these initiatives, Wagner undoubtedly made a difference to the lives of her pupils, not only providing a means by which they could complete their education, but also showing them that they could

⁸⁰ *Ibid.* 270.

⁸¹ See Wagner, *Kim Su Bang and other stories of Korea* (1909), 66. The missionary preacher dispatches the class leader Cho with money to the house of Lady Na, to bargain for Mittome, the housemaid and slave.

⁸² See Wagner, *Pokjumie* (1911), 70. The female missionary, realizing Pokjumie's circumstances, seeks to buy her from the coolie Cho.

⁸³ See Wagner, *Kumokie*, 134.

⁸⁴ Ellasue Wagner, *Second Annual Report of the Woman's Missionary Council of the Episcopal Methodist Church, South, for 1911-1912*, 269.

⁸⁵ Boys' education was considered as much more important than that for girls. Consequently, girls from poor families often lacked financial support. (See *ibid.* 270).

⁸⁶ See Ellasue C. Wagner and Lillian E. Nichols, 'Holston Institute', *Annual Report of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South*, (1918), 157-159.

be financially independent. In this respect at least, the model of womanhood she presented was not the Victorian norm, in which a woman would be dependent upon a man. Moreover, Wagner herself exemplified female competence and autonomy. According to Ryu Dal Young, who worked as a teacher of natural history at the Holston Institute in the late 1930s, Wagner was a ‘giant’ among women, a principal who grew the Holston Institute from its tiny beginnings into one of the pre-eminent schools in Korea.⁸⁷ Indeed, by 1940, when Wagner was evacuated from Korea, the school that had begun by educating 12 girls in a building that was no more than a shed had over one thousand students, and over three thousand applicants for places.⁸⁸

In addition to her activities in education, Wagner also took part in the leadership and supervision of social evangelical institutions for women, such as in Songdo, ‘Ko Rya Ya Ja Kwan’, and in Seoul, ‘Tai hwa Ya Ja Kwan.’ These provided opportunities for Korean women and girls to venture out from their private space and join in many kinds of education and activities, in addition to the regular school program.⁸⁹ The Woman’s Evangelical Centre in Songdo offered a range of facilities for Korean women and girls, including a kindergarten, dispensary, baby clinic, library, classes in cookery, a program for care and training of children, a preliminary education program for first and second grades taught to girls aged over ten years, Bible classes and English classes. There were also special institutes for the women of city and country churches, and a night school for young married women, the majority of whom were from non-Christian homes. The Centre had a sewing room and music rooms with piano and organ, and ran regular Sunday services.⁹⁰ At the Seoul Social-Evangelistic Centre, a Christian institution for women and children, Wagner supervised four departments, namely child public welfare, social service, education and evangelism.⁹¹ Just as in her teaching career, in her work at these institutes Wagner exhibited her excellent skills of organization, independence and leadership.

Wagner also served for a short time as editor in chief of *The Korea Mission Field*, a monthly English-language journal for Christian progress, a periodical published in Seoul

⁸⁷ See Ryu Dal Young, *My Life Note: Precious Meetings* (Seoul: 1998), 106, 109. Requoted from Kim SungEun, ‘hanmal iljesigi elasuwagnerui hankuk yeosung gyoyookgwa sahoibokjisaeop’ [Ellasue Wagner’s Korean women education and social wellbeing business in the late Korea in the period of Japanese rule], *Hankuk Gidokgyowa Yeoksa* [Korean Christianity and History], Vol.41, (Sept. 2014), 138

⁸⁸ Wagner, *Korea Calls*, 50.

⁸⁹ See Wagner (supervisor) ‘Korea Conference: Woman’s Evangelistic Center, Songdo’, *Annual Report of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South*, (1926), 98.

⁹⁰ See Wagner, ‘The Songdo Women’s Evangelistic Center’, *The Korea Mission Field*, General Council of Evangelical Missions in Korea, (May, 1924), 106-108.

⁹¹ See Wagner, ‘The Social-Evangelistic Center, Seoul’, *The Korea Mission Field*, (March 1927), 47-50.

from 1905 to 1941 by the Federal Council of the Protestant Evangelical Missions in Korea. It had a circulation of more than 10,000 copies, and was read in missionary circles in Korea and beyond. In 1931 she broke new ground for woman by being among the first group of female missionaries to be ordained as pastors.

However, while Wagner was undoubtedly accomplished in her professional work, and provided her pupils with a model of female leadership and independence, some critics have noted that she seems not to have developed personal relationships with Korean women.⁹²

Indeed, at first glance it would appear that Wagner did not put much energy or effort into building relationships with Korean people, whether women or men. This apparent separation between missionary and local people is reflected in *Pokjumie*, in which the female missionary character is portrayed as distant from the local Korean people, even her assistant, the Korean Bible woman.⁹³ In that novel, published in 1911, Wagner seems to present the American female missionary as a ‘rescuer’ or ‘giver’ of western ‘modern’ comfort, as shown in the evangelical procession when the ‘queer-looking little pony, meek in appearance, but not in nature’ is laden with bedding and clothing articles, with food sufficient for a trip of three weeks, and with items such as ‘a cot, an umbrella, and sundry bundles and parcels.’⁹⁴ The missionary has also provided herself with a guard and protector, ‘a half-grown [Korean] lad’⁹⁵ whom she calls ‘the boy’⁹⁶ and who serves her as ‘chief cook and bottle washer’, while considering himself ‘the protector of the *pueen* [lady].’⁹⁷ The head of the procession, the female missionary, ‘had learned not only the [Korean] language, but the manners and customs of the people’, that she ‘loved [the Korean people] and gave herself in never-tiring service to them; and in return they gave her their respect, honour, and love.’⁹⁸ Here, the missionary is presented rather like a noblewoman, looked up to and adored by the local Korean people.

Similarly, in the scene in which the female missionary conveys the new faith to Pokjumie, she is presented as an ‘elegant rescuer’, her superior dignified manner set against the ‘poor needy’ Korean girl, the desperate receiver:

⁹² See Kim SungEun, ‘hanmal iljesigi elasu wagnerui hankuk yeosung gyoyookgwa sahoibokjisaeop’ [Ellasue Wagner’s Korean women education and social wellbeing business in the late Korea in the period of Japanese rule], 149.

⁹³ See *Pokjumie*, Chap.11, ‘A Pending Battle Averted’, 63.

⁹⁴ *Pokjumie*, 63-64.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.* 64.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.* 65.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.* 64.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.* 65.

With longing eyes [Pokjumie] took in every line of the foreign lady's sweet face, and saw behind the calm blue eyes the deep peace and beauty of a life given to Christ. In a few seconds the girl had made up her mind that she could and would trust this lady. With trembling limbs she made her way past the children, and before the quiet little *pueen* knew what had happened she had thrown herself on her knees at her feet and was sobbing out her pitiful story.⁹⁹

However, in Wagner's later novel, *Kumokie*, the relationship between the female missionary character and the local Korean people seems a less hierarchical one. Following an unwelcome encounter with the husband who had abandoned her, Kumokie appeals for help to Miss Keith, the female missionary.¹⁰⁰ Although this woman is the teacher and school supervisor, responsible for setting rules and ensuring that they are kept, she appears more as a mother or friend, rather than a distant and authoritarian figure. She approves and encourages Kumokie, telling her: 'You dear, brave girl. You answered him well. Your uncle and aunt will also be made happy by your stand for the right.'¹⁰¹ This might suggest that Wagner herself was building relationships with Korean people, but given the lack of reflection on this issue in her published writings, that cannot be definitively confirmed.

The most that we can be certain of, based on Wagner's memoir *Korea Calls*, is that she did have some close relationships with Korean women.¹⁰² She writes particularly about a Korean woman called Lois Chun, referring to her as 'friend, adviser, helper, and Bible Woman.'¹⁰³ It appears that before her conversion Lois Chun was a *mudang*, but that afterwards she worked as a nurse ('amah') for Mrs Collyer's little boy Charlie, and then as a Bible woman with Wagner. It seems that her assistance was invaluable, especially when non-Christian Korean visitors come to look at the furniture and other western trappings of the missionary house. Along with her son Namsannie (meaning South Mountain in Korean), who worked as Wagner's cook, Lois Chun would be involved in the process of teaching and preaching to the visitors, telling of Jesus as 'the one who drives out the devils and gives you peace and joy'.¹⁰⁴ However much her appearance might have suggested a simple and

⁹⁹ *Ibid.* 67.

¹⁰⁰ See Wagner, *Kumokie*, 'An Unwelcome Visitor', 138-153, esp. 148-151.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.* 150-151.

¹⁰² Wagner also writes of being moved by the 'sympathetic and dear' [Christian] Korean people present at Newton's funeral. Her language teacher, 'Pak Tab Yung, and another man walked all the 60 miles and kept up with our chair coolies. When they reached the cemetery, their feet were so sore that they could not go on into the city that night. The Korean people are kind and lovable; I love them more and more each day!' (*Korea Calls*, 39).

¹⁰³ Wagner, *Korea Calls*, 27.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.* 27.

ignorant old woman, Wagner recognized and valued her as knowing exactly how to handle the local visitors, and as a good speaker and ‘true evangelist.’¹⁰⁵

Wagner has also been criticized for her apparent failure to promote Korean women’s leadership in academia,¹⁰⁶ a lack that may to some degree be associated with her very limited relationships with Korean women. In her mission work Wagner concentrated her efforts on meeting present and practical needs, rather than on education at higher levels to prepare girls for future leadership roles. Indeed, most of the graduates of the Holston Institute appear to have contributed to Korean society as teachers, nurses or housewives, with very few taking up professional careers at higher levels. Upon this circumstance, in 1940, when Wagner was to evacuate from Korea and had to hand over leadership of the Institute, the leadership of the girls’ school was passed to the ‘male’ chief of school affairs.¹⁰⁷ Of course, this passing over of female candidates may have been due, in part, to the male-centred system then in place. However, it might also be the case that Wagner herself subscribed to the Victorian ideal of womanhood, in which a woman’s main role is as assistant to a man. Yet if this is the case, it is hard to reconcile with Wagner’s own situation and her many years as a leader, both at the school and in other missionary institutions.

Overall, it would seem that through her mission work with Korean girls and women, Wagner did experience personal change and growth. In her personal relationships with the local people, what evidence we have suggests that she became less authoritarian and more friendly. Meanwhile, in her professional life, as teacher, editor and pastor, she exercised strong and effective leadership and gained respect for her work in a way that would have been unthinkable for most women within the gender restraints imposed by her western home society. Thus, while Wagner worked for the emancipation of Korean women, she also achieved self-emancipation on her own terms.

6.3.3. Jean Perry

In common with the other female missionary authors, Perry’s main purpose in writing her narratives was to report upon the work of mission and its fruits. However, unlike Baird and Wagner, in her writing Perry does address the issue of interaction between the female missionaries and Korean people. Moreover, she attempts to offer a balanced account, not

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.* 32.

¹⁰⁶ See Kim SungEun, ‘hanmal iljesigi elasuwagnerui hankuk yeosung gyoyookgwa sahoibokjisaeop’ [Ellasue Wagner’s Korean women education and social wellbeing business in the late Korea in the period of Japanese rule], 149.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

falling into sectarianism or privileging either East or West. In *The Man in Grey*, for example, Perry demonstrates the close ties between the missionary couple Mr and Mrs Bright and their Christian Korean neighbours Mr and Mrs Min. Both couples suffer the death of their infant child, and through this commonality of grief Perry emphasizes a shared humanity: ‘Oh, East and West! Each with the same capacity for love, and the same Saviour! God bless the East! God bless the West!’¹⁰⁸ The missionaries and their Korean parishioners are ‘one in heart and one in faith’, bound together in ‘the divine cord of sympathy’.

Nevertheless, despite these close ties, Perry does not go so far as to put the East on an ‘equal’ footing with the West.¹⁰⁹ For example, *Chilgoopie the Glad* includes a scene in which the female missionary is leading morning worship with a small congregation of Korean women and men, including Mr So, her language teacher, Sock-su, the hired Korean housekeeper, and Ko, young Korean man recently hired as a housekeeper. The action is seen through the eyes of and narrated in the voice of the woman missionary, who tells us that, ‘I was yearning over *the little flock of ignorant souls* round me; for even those who believed were yet very far from all the truth.’¹¹⁰ This objectification of Korean believers continues when Ko is moved to tears by the service, but rather than being concerned with Ko’s spiritual growth, the missionary is interested only in her own success: ‘My heart gave a great leap of joy, as I thought, “Here is a penitent sinner - now I can write home of another conversion, and the subscribers will be happy!”’¹¹¹

Indeed, Perry reveals the tendency for missionaries to perceive the Korean people as inferior, reflecting the asymmetric relationship between those performing mission, and those ‘receiving’ mission. We see this again when Perry’s female missionary author and her co-worker, presumably based on Perry herself and her companion Ellen Pash, attempt to find a wife for Chilgoopie.¹¹² As Perry writes, we the missionaries ‘felt like elders responsible for the welfare of these our spiritual children, and perhaps, unintentionally something of a feeling of superiority. Spiritually we all felt we were one; but between the nations there was to us a great gulf fixed; and we unconsciously supposed they realized this as well.’¹¹³

¹⁰⁸ Perry, *The Man in Grey*, 95.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.* 84-85.

¹¹⁰ Perry, *Chilgoopie the Glad*, 45.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.* 47.

¹¹² *Ibid.* 132-133

¹¹³ *Ibid.* 132.

There are further examples of this asymmetry in the relationship between western missionary and local Korean people in Perry's *Uncle Mac the Missionary*. There, following the death of Nell, the missionaries' baby daughter, the child's Korean nurse confesses to having stolen her kerchief. She makes her confession in a public revival meeting, returning the kerchief to the child's mother, telling her: 'I took it, to remember her by. I could not hold her more in my arms, and I felt I must have something that had touched her. This covered her face, and they would have burned it, and when they did not look, I took it, and oh, I sinned, I sinned.' Here we see the missionary wife granting forgiveness, and acting as benefactor, as she tells the nurse: 'No, no, take it, you may have it. See, Amah, I give it you - it is yours to keep', and the Korean woman receives it, putting it tenderly in her bosom.¹¹⁴

Nevertheless, it does seem that in her mission work of emancipation for Korean women, Perry found herself challenged by the devotion and faith of Korean women believers. For example, in her autobiographical work, *Twenty Years a Korea Missionary*, there is little trace of Perry's previous characterization of Korean people as ignorant or inferior. Instead it reads the strength and persistence of Korean women, exemplified in Grandmother Shin, who had been illiterate all her life but now, at 70 years old, has studied hard so that she might be able to read the Bible for herself.¹¹⁵ Grandmother Shin 'felt called of God to start a church in her native village ten miles away, and for several years has made frequent visits on foot'. The old woman 'walked ten miles out on Saturday, holding her aching back with one hand and swinging her long staff with the other. All day Sabbath she went from house to house or held meetings for the women, on Monday trudged ten miles back with heavy feet but light heart.' As a result of her evangelical efforts there are now 'sixteen catechumens in that village preparing for baptism, and they are going to build a little church this spring.'¹¹⁶

Perry also records how a Korean Christian girl, married into a heathen family, courageously evangelized the family and the village, leading many to conversion and making her home the meeting place for regular Christian worship.¹¹⁷

Another story told in *Twenty Years a Korea Missionary* seems to indicate changes in Perry's attitude to the local Korean people, however slight or subtle those changes might have been. She tells how, at a revival meeting, a Korean man 'confessed' that having been

¹¹⁴ Perry, *Uncle Mac the Missionary*, 37-38.

¹¹⁵ Perry, *Twenty Years a Korea Missionary*, 50-51.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.* 59-60.

asked by the missionary to sell a cow in the market for not less than 80, he had been unable to get more than 79; after much thought, he had nevertheless given the missionary 80, not 79, and was now owing up to this and saying that the missionary owed him the difference.¹¹⁸ This story could be seen as offsetting the scene in *Uncle Mac the Missionary* in which we learn that the Korean nurse has stolen the baby's kerchief. Moreover, in this autobiographical work Perry considers the matter of confession of sins not just on the part of Koreans, but also on the part of missionaries, surprisingly presenting the Korean parishioners and missionary preacher on equal terms.¹¹⁹

We can trace further changes in Perry, for example with regard to her women's consciousness, and concern for the marginalized in society. Before leaving to take up mission work in Korea, Perry led an unremarkable life. She would lead a Bible class for women in the pastor's absence, and another class for young women, held at her own home once a week. In her own sister's view, Perry was not strong enough to take on the role of foreign missionary.¹²⁰ Moreover, it appears that Perry's motivation to become a lady missionary owed much to the encouragement of a male pastor at her church in Australia, rather than her own will. Nevertheless, over the years of missionary activity for women and children in Korea, it seems that Perry experienced great personal growth. She became a 'strong' woman with a concern for the position of all women, and all those pushed to the margins of society.

Perry's concern for women's issues can be seen early on, in her narratives. In *The Man in Grey* she considers and critiques the 'norm' of male leadership in mixed missionary gatherings.¹²¹ It says how, at an annual meeting of the missionary society in Korea, a female missionary, Miss Smart, leads a meeting that is at first intended to be for women only, but as many of the women's male relatives join in, it changes in character and composition to become a 'mixed' meeting. A male participant then raises an objection,

¹¹⁸ See *ibid.* 52-53. Ellasue Wagner tells another version of this story: 'Once when Mr Cram sent Quan to market he said, "This cow cost us Y 40.00, and you must be sure to get as much when you sell her." He returned with the required cash and for some time they thought all was well. Revival time came around. Confession of their sins is one feature that was brought out at those revival meetings, and not infrequently the confession dealt more with the shortcomings of his neighbours than with those of the penitent. When Quan arose in church to make his confession Mr Cram wondered what it might be now. "Moksa" (Pastor), said Quan Su Bang, looking at Mr Cram, "do you remember that cow I sold? You told me to get Y 40.00 for her. Well, I must confess my wrongdoings: I only got Y 36.00 for her and I gave you the entire Y 40.00, so you owe me Y 4.00."' (See Wagner, *Korea Calls*, 30).

¹¹⁹ See Perry, *Twenty Years a Korea Missionary*, 53-55. Perry even tells how a 'respected' western missionary loses his temper with an old Korean man, thus illustrating that the missionaries too are sinners, and neither perfect nor distinct from their Korean congregation.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.* 11.

¹²¹ Perry, *The Man in Grey*, 108-110.

disputing Miss Smart's right to lead men together with women; in his view, 'It was not her work; She ought not to address a mixed meeting', and 'It is not permitted unto women to speak; but if they would ask anything, let them ask their husbands at home.'¹²² Here the attitude of the outraged male participant clearly indicates the continuing dominance of the traditional Victorian gender ideology among missionary circles, whereby women were not allowed to exercise leadership on an equal footing with men.

Perry's concern for women's rights is also evident in *Uncle Mac the Missionary*, where Mac, the young American missionary, wishes that his girlfriend Miss Grant, whom Perry portrays as a secular girl, might join him in his work in Korea. Mrs Bright, herself the wife of a missionary, and perhaps voicing Perry's own views, notes the importance of 'independent' calling for a woman in order that a couple might work effectively in mission. Here, Perry indicates the importance of a woman's autonomy in responding to the call.

From the very beginning of her mission activities, Perry turned her concern for women into action. When she first arrived in Pusan, she taught sanitation and first aid to women, while also running classes for those who had applied for Baptism, and teaching the Sunday school for women and children.¹²³ Although her later mission activities were much focused on for orphans and the blind in her concerns for the destitute and the marginalized in society,¹²⁴ Perry continued to run meetings and prayer gatherings for local women (and men) at her own home, as there was no church nearby.¹²⁵ These prayer gatherings took place every evening, and were attended by around 16 women, along with their children, husbands and brothers.¹²⁶

In her book *Chilgoopie the Glad*, Perry relates an incident, already mentioned earlier, which seems to have marked a turning point in her attitudes to mission and gender. A stranger came to her door, a young Korean male, hungry and destitute, asking for food. At first Perry was hesitant as to how to respond, remembering her instruction from the missionary society that she was being sent to Korea to work for and with women, and that if any man were to

¹²² *Ibid.* 109.

¹²³ See E. A. Kerr and G. Anderson, *The Australian Presbyterian Mission in Korea, 1889-1941* (Sydney: Australian Presbyterian Board of Missions, 1970) trans. Yi Wonho and Kim Sunghae, *Hoji Changro Sungyohoiui pusan gyungnam jiyeok jonggyo mit gyoyook whaldong: 1889-1941* (Pusan, 1995), 28.

¹²⁴ The first to receive Perry's care was a homeless Whonga (Korean girl), then five years old, who was begging for rice. Perry then took in two waifs at a time, supporting them on her salary until she got funds from home for them. All of them grew up to be well; three became teachers in a mission school; Kimi, who was disabled and needed crutches to get about, became a Christian worker. See Perry, *Twenty Years a Korea Missionary*, 16.

¹²⁵ *Chilgoopie the Glad*, 28-29.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

appeal to her for help, she should direct him to the male missionaries, ‘for much misunderstanding has been brought about by women thinking their work to be among both sexes.’¹²⁷ With no male missionary to whom she could turn, Perry tells how she said in her heart, ‘Oh, man, why are you not a woman?’ However, at that point ‘the thought came as a lightning flash to clear my mental vision –“And who is my neighbour?”’¹²⁸ Here Perry clearly steps outside the missionary expectation of ‘Woman’s Work for Woman’ and the norm of gender separation that was central to the Victorian ideal of womanhood. She chooses to help the young man, accepting him as a housekeeper at the home for destitute children. In doing so she acts independently and courageously, and gives further proof of her concern for the marginalized.

In fact, Perry’s mission work with this young man, Chilgoopie, did not always run smoothly. Although she describes him as a ‘friend and helper’ at the children’s home, and had a fervent wish to help him, she was inclined to make plans for his future without consulting him first. She even tried to arrange a wife for him, excitedly planning how she would report this Christian marriage to her supporters and benefactors back at home, while deaf to his protests that he did not wish to marry. Chilgoopie eventually then left her cottage, to pursue his own plan for his evangelizing work.¹²⁹

Perry’s changes and growth in her work for women and the marginalized may have owed much to her mission colleague, Ellen Pash, who had already served as a Salvation Army officer in England, France, and India,¹³⁰ where she had been active in the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union, promoting women’s participation in politics and social activities. Later she had been involved in the women’s franchise movement in America.¹³¹ Given this emphasis on women’s rights, it seems likely that Pash would have exerted an influence on Perry’s own views and mission activities.

In 1897 Perry and Pash travelled together to Australia, to raise funds to found an orphanage in Seoul. It seems that this might have been the occasion of much personal growth and consciousness raising for Perry. The two women attended the monthly meeting of the

¹²⁷ *Ibid.* 24.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.* 24-25.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.* Chap.10. ‘How We Parted’, 126-144.

¹³⁰ See *The Brisbane Courier*, 4 August 1897, 3. and Perry’s mission autobiography, *Twenty Years a Korea Missionary*, 16-17.

¹³¹ Frances Elizabeth Willard, *Address Before the Second Biennial Convention of the World’s Woman’s Christian Temperance Union, and the Twentieth Annual Convention of the National Woman’s Christian Temperance Union* (Chicago: Woman’s Temperance Publishing Association, 1893). See also the report in the *San Francisco Call*, 17 May, 1895, 7., that a famous lecturer of WCTU, Miss Ellen Pash, will arrive from England.

Presbyterian Women's Missionary Union in Australia, and made a tour of the country's churches, making speeches and even performing a play to present their projected mission work, urging their audiences to provide financial and spiritual support, a plea which seems to have attracted much interest.¹³²

After their fund raising work in Australia, Perry and Pash founded the British Evangelistic Mission, henceforth working as independent missionaries, which allowed them to broaden the scope of their work to take care of the marginalized, including blind boys.¹³³ As independent missionaries they were involved in activities well beyond what would normally be allowed to women according to the typical Victorian feminine ideal, such as financing and commissioning construction work at the new foothold mission station, thus revealing their autonomous spirit and gifts of leadership.¹³⁴

Under the strain of her mission work, Perry succumbed more than once to typhoid fever. In 1905, on a trip to England where she was supposed to rest and recuperate, she attended the Keswick religious conference, where she was asked to speak 'on the platform' to the large missionary gathering.¹³⁵ Such a request was remarkable, considering the prevailing views with regard to the place and status of women in the religious and missionary circles.¹³⁶ Despite the many efforts and endeavours of the women missionaries, including the ministry of women in churches, they were often treated as not equal to their male counterparts, and they were subject to many constraints,¹³⁷ which sometimes created dissension between the

¹³² See *The Brisbane Courier*, 5 June, 1897, 11.

¹³³ Perry uses the examples of two young men (ages 19 and 23), who have made successful evangelical trips in the countryside, carrying a basket of Scriptures and selling them on the way. Perry especially points out that blind evangelists could address meetings of women, young or old, without causing offence to any. (Perry, *Twenty Years a Korea Missionary*, 36.)

¹³⁴ Perry's narrative *Chilgoopie the Glad*, published in 1906, seems to use as background the cottage building, purchased and reconstructed by Perry and Pash for 14 pounds, where they took in destitute girls as their funds permitted. The native cottage was small, with a dining and sitting room 8ft by 16ft, bedrooms 8ft by 8ft, and kitchen 6ft by 6ft; the doors and windows were of paper with wooden frame, and the heating system was in the Korean traditional style, with fire running through flues under the floors. Later they built their own brick house as a home for destitute children in Seoul. (See Perry, *Twenty Years a Korea Missionary*, 17-18, 26.)

¹³⁵ Perry, *Twenty Years a Korea Missionary*, 25.

¹³⁶ As revealed in the questioning of Miss Smart's leadership of a mixed gender gathering at the annual missionary conference in Korea. See Perry, *The Man in Grey*, 108-110.

¹³⁷ See *Report of the Centenary Conference of the Protestant Missions of the World*, Vol.II, James Johnston (ed.) (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1888), 166-7. The secretary of the American Baptist Missionary Union clearly reaffirms the prevailing sentiment with regard to women missionaries: 'While it must be accepted as the duty of single ladies to be helpful in all departments of the work, it ought to be expected of them that they will carefully abstain from any interference with matters not specially committed to their hands... Woman's work in the foreign field must be careful to recognize the headship of man in ordering the affairs of the kingdom of God. We must not allow the major vote of the better sex, nor the ability and efficiency of so many of our female helpers, nor even the exceptional faculty for leadership and organization which some of them have displayed in their work, to discredit the natural and predestined headship of man in Missions, as well as in the Church of God: "Adam was first formed, then Eve," and "the head of the woman is

sexes. However, at Keswick Perry met with a warm and favourable response, not least in the form of substantial donations, which finally made possible the brick house Perry had longed to build for her Korean mission.¹³⁸ This success seems to have persuaded her that she must return to Korea, to carry on the work she had begun there. Together with Pash, she purchased land in Seoul, and the two women built their own brick house, which would be their home for destitute children.¹³⁹ In the times in which they lived, such achievements mark them out as extraordinary women, exercising independence of thought and action.

Of course, because Perry and Pash carried out their work as independent missionaries, they could not rely on the usual funding channels, and were forced to engage in fundraising activities, writing regular reports and letters to their Christian contacts at home, requesting support both spiritual and financial.¹⁴⁰ This had the unlooked for side-effect of helping Perry to develop her writing skills, another area of personal development alongside that of her growth in compassion and concern for women and the marginalized.

When assessing Perry's achievements in mission it should also be borne in mind that she often cooperated with local Korean women, as revealed in some of her writings. This is shown in the narratives in the case of characters such as Hulmonie in *Chilgoopie the Glad* and the old Korean woman in *The Man in Grey*, while others, unrecognized or unreported, also contributed much to the success of Perry's mission work. We even have a photograph of one of these women, Mareeya, 'the matron of the home for destitute children, Seoul.'¹⁴¹

Thus, through her work of mission Perry developed both personally and professionally, becoming a champion for marginalized children and women, a noted writer and a respected speaker. Her achievements inside Korea, and in Australia and England, show how she developed an independent and autonomous spirit and the ability to lead, all qualities far outside the Victorian ideal of womanhood.

the man." This order of creation has not been changed by Redemption, and we must confirm all our plans and policies for the uplifting of the race through the power of the Gospel to this Divine ordinance.'

¹³⁸ Perry, *Twenty Years a Korea Missionary*, 26.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.* 32.

¹⁴⁰ Perry's novels, such as *The Man in Grey*, *Chilgoopie the Glad*, and *Uncle Mac the Missionary*, also seem to have been written for the purpose of attracting financial support. The back cover of Perry's memoir *Twenty Years a Korea Missionary* carried the following direct appeal for donations to support her mission work in Korea: 'Home for Destitute Girls, Blind Boys' Home; Village work. Support of girl, 6 pound a year. Support of blind boy, 6 pound a year. Support of a blind evangelist, 10 pound a year. Bible woman, 8 pound a year. Missionaries, 7 pound a year.'

¹⁴¹ See the picture on the front page of *Chilgoopie the Glad*, of Perry and Mareeya reading together.

6.3.4. Lillias Underwood

Lillias (Horton) Underwood began her career in mission as a single woman, posted to Korea as a medical missionary. However, after her marriage to the Reverend Horace Grant Underwood (1859-1916) her position changed; although she still worked in medical mission, her primary focus was on her role as a wife and mother of a son, Horace Horton Underwood. For Underwood, her medical mission was not just about healing of the body, but was deeply related to evangelical work. In 1895, when cholera spread through Korea,¹⁴² devastating the area around Seoul and killing nearly two-thirds of those infected,¹⁴³ Underwood joined other foreign missionaries to care for Korean patients, giving thanks that while she provided medical treatment, she was also able to convey the gospel of the great doctor Christ.¹⁴⁴

Indeed, while tending to her patients, Underwood never lost an opportunity to convey the Word. This was true just as much during her service as physician to Queen Min, from October 1888 until the Queen's assassination in 1895,¹⁴⁵ as when she was providing medical services to Korean women in the '*Jejungwon*' government hospital.¹⁴⁶

Underwood began holding Bible classes very soon after her arrival in Korea. At that time she could not speak Korean, and relied upon the assistance of a local boy who had learned English, and a former sorceress who could read Chinese Scriptures.¹⁴⁷ She used every space and every opportunity to evangelize, for example by holding meetings and Bible classes or prayer gatherings for Korean women in the part of her house used as a dispensary. From these small meetings with women patients grew religious communities.

Underwood often accompanied her husband on evangelical trips, where she would take responsibility for leading the work with women. While some of her travels may have been in response to health concerns, as she suffered from rheumatism, it seems that she greatly

¹⁴² See Lillias Underwood, *Fifteen Years Among the Top-knots or Life in Korea*, Chapters 8 and 9, 133-144.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.* 144. Lillias Underwood states that the Korean government originally granted about 2000.00 Yen (about 1000 dollars) to respond to the violent epidemic, for example by setting up an emergency hospital, enforcing sanitary policy and preventing the advance of the disease, but corruption among officials meant that most of this money was diverted to their personal interests (*ibid.* 137).

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.* 144, 'people who watched missionaries working over the sick night after night said to each other, "How these foreigners love us, would we do as much for one of our own kin as they do for strangers?" Some men who saw Mr. Underwood hurrying along the road in the gray twilight of a summer morning remarked, "There goes the Jesus man, he works all night and all day with the sick without resting." "Why does he do it?" Said another. "Because he loves us," was the reply. What sweeter reward could be had than that the people should see the Lord in our service. Surely the plague was not all evil when it served to bring the Lord more clearly to the view of the souls he died to save.'

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.* 114-115. In response to Queen Min's question about Christmas, Lillias Underwood conveyed the gospel. A few days later, Queen Min mentioned the United States as a strong and powerful country. Lillias Underwood then introduced the Queen to 'the better land' than the United States, the land filled with joy - Heaven, to which no sinner can enter.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.* 6-7.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.* 8.

enjoyed the opportunity to visit new and sometimes remote areas of Korea, especially in the north. On their ‘honeymoon’ trip after their wedding in March 1889, Lillias and her husband travelled to the interior lands in the northern parts of Korea, including Songdo, Pyeng Yang, and We Ju, visiting village by village.¹⁴⁸

However, despite Underwood’s enthusiasm for reaching out to and evangelizing the people of Korea, her view of the local population is not easy to pin down. In some cases she is critical, and seems to objectify Korean women. For example, she says of Korean women believers that they look so much ‘like sheep to Pastor Won [Rev. Horace Underwood] and his wife, so ignorant or helpless ... especially the women with their white aprons over their heads, they looked not unlike a flock of sheep trotting leisurely foldward.’¹⁴⁹ When referring to the poverty of the woman she has hired as a nurse, she describes her house as ‘a dark little hut’. The nurse is paid a salary of two dollars and a half gold a month, a small amount from the perspective of the western missionary, yet Underwood writes that, upon ‘receiving such a magnificent stipend’ the woman has become ‘a person of wealth and importance’, thus emphasizing the gulf in terms of wealth between West and East.¹⁵⁰ This condescending attitude is seen in relation to dietary matters too, as Underwood notes that Korean babies never had bottles, ‘till we westerners came and taught them our higher civilization’. She is dismayed at the lack of milk, cheese, buttermilk, and cream, and cannot ‘think how a whole nation can exist without them.’¹⁵¹

However, Underwood did not always view the local people in a negative light. As she began to encounter Korean women, she recognized their potential, seeing beyond their lack of education to their devotion, strength, and independence, and even being challenged by these qualities. For example, she tells us about one occasion when she was leading her regular Bible study meeting with a group of Korean women at Mo Hwa Kwan:

One day when the rain had been literally pouring down, I went out there rather late to attend dispensary, not expecting many in such weather, but there they all were waiting to begin the meeting and were all engaged in prayer. I listened to a fervent appeal from one who was leading, not forgetting to ask a blessing on their teacher in her house-cleaning hurry. It is inspiring to meet with these women and see their growth in grace and their child-like strong faith which leans hard on God and takes everything to him. *Often I*

¹⁴⁸ How effective their evangelical work was is indicated in a letter sent in 1891 by Dr Gale from We Ju, where he was then visiting: ‘I am surprised to find the result of your work as seen in We Ju and the surrounding villages. The people here are wonderfully awakened. We have not seen all the baptized members yet, but those we have seen are fine. Your accounts of We Ju to me have been more than realized.’ See Lillias H. Underwood, *Underwood of Korea* (New York, 1918), 92.

¹⁴⁹ Underwood, *With Tommy Tompkins*, 76-77.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.* 18.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.* 28.

*confess with humility that their faith is stronger than my own and that they teach and help me as much as I do them.*¹⁵²

In Underwood's view, in order for women's mission activities in Korea to be effective and fruitful, education and evangelization should have three foci: first, teaching girls in schools; second, training Christian women; and third, education for the country women, holding Bible classes of a week or ten days' duration.¹⁵³

With regard to the first of these three foci, Underwood was concerned that many girls from poor families could not afford a formal education, noting that, 'the great majority of our Christian girls, not to mention unbelievers, are not getting even a grammar school education, not because their parents are opposed to it, but because they are so poor. They cannot be spared from the service needs at home, and often as soon as they are old enough, they must be married off.' Thousands of Christian girls were left 'without even a knowledge of reading, or if they have that, of almost nothing more. Even the simplest ideas of hygiene and sanitation, the commonest rules of caring for household and children, according to enlightened Christian custom are absolutely unknown to them.'¹⁵⁴

Underwood, addressing this situation, insisted that 'nothing can compare with the importance of training the future mothers of the people, in knowledge of God,'¹⁵⁵ thus making a clear link between the Victorian domestic ideal of womanhood and women's Christian evangelical influence in their primary role as mothers.

With regard to the second focus of her mission activity, 'training Christian women,' Underwood observes that:

Wherever Christian Missions are found in Korea, there are Christian women, whose simple earnest faith and devoted persevering service and patient endurance of trial and persecution are an inspiration, and sometimes a reproach to us who have been reared in the full blaze of Gospel light and opportunity. Some among them it is true seem very dull, some are overwhelmed with hard work, poverty and ignorance, but it not infrequently happens that some of those who have seemed most hopelessly dull and lethargic have suddenly developed into the most earnest and useful workers.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵² Lillias Underwood, 'Report of Medical and Evangelistic Work by Mrs. H. G. Underwood for 1898', In *Horace G. Underwood Papers II* edited and translated by Yi Man Yeon and Oak Sung Deuk, (Seoul: 2006), 581, my italics.; see also Jung Mi Hyeon, *Lillias Horton Underwood*, (Seoul: 2015), 171.

¹⁵³ Mrs. H. G. Underwood, 'Woman's Work for Women in Korea', *Missionary Review of the World* (July, 1905), in *Horace G. Underwood Papers III*, Yi Man Yeon and Oak Sung Deuk (Seoul: 2007), 538-539.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.* 328-329.

¹⁵⁵ Lillias Underwood, 'The Need of Education for Poor Korean Girls', *The Korea Mission Field*, General Council of Evangelical Missions in Korea (ed.), Vol.7, no.11, (Nov., 1911), 330.

¹⁵⁶ Lillias Underwood, 'Sketches of Some Korean Women,' *The Korea Mission Field* Vol.2, No.6 (April 1906), 105.

Encountering many Korean Christian women who had good potential to be passionate and effective workers for the faith, Underwood prioritized the training that would help them to overcome their difficult circumstances. She writes, for example, of Mrs Yi:

a widow of between fifty and sixty who could not read [who] moved with her two sons from the Christian village of 'Sorai', where she had been converted and instructed, to 'Chil Pong'... Though she could not read, her son could, and, through her, they, their wives, and, later, their children, were all converted, and little by little their neighbours. There are now two little groups of Christians and two neat little churches within ten miles of each other, all practicing and preaching the Word, as the result of this ignorant old woman's faith, labour, and prayer.¹⁵⁷

A much younger Korean Christian women, Mrs Yi's daughter-in-law, was converted after her marriage. She was then 'eager to tell her friends,' and so:

when at length she was allowed to pay the customary visit to her relatives, she began to 'chando hao' (pass on the word). Scorn, mockery, and abuse were the result. But she persisted, and so faithfully that one by one they yielded, and now seven sturdy, earnest farmer households are believing, baptized, and passing on the Word. These are incidents which could be paralleled many times by everyone who has had experience in the work.¹⁵⁸

Although many Korean women were uneducated and, at least from the perspective of the western missionaries, ignorant, they often showed great qualities of leadership, providing models of devotion and wisdom. Underwood seems to have recognized these qualities, and seen the Korean women as a massive potential resource for the missionary project.¹⁵⁹

The third of Underwood's three foci was the education and evangelization of Korean country women, which she believed could best be achieved through short courses of around 1-2 weeks' duration. In her personal annual report for 1899 she tells us of such a course, with a daily attendance of about 50, and of its challenges and rewards:

The women are many of them rather slow, are utterly unaccustomed to study or to committing anything to memory ... [yet] I cannot help adding that it was a blessed experience I never can forget, to meet with these earnest, fervent women to see how readily and eagerly they grasped the truth, with what simple strong faith they received it and how quickly and tenderly their hearts responded to the story of the Lord's love. We all felt the Spirit's presence in great power in our midst.¹⁶⁰

These Bible classes seem to have had a great effect, especially in the rural, remote settings where educational opportunities were scarce. In her personal report for September, 1904,

¹⁵⁷ Lillias Underwood, 'Woman's Work for Women in Korea', *Missionary Review of the World* (July, 1905), In *Horace G. Underwood Papers III*, edited and translated by Yi Man Yeol and Oak Sung Deuk, (Seoul: 2007), 540.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.* 542.

¹⁵⁹ This 'training for Christian women' seems to have brought about big changes in the lives not just of Korean women but also of their husbands, as they ceased the practice of wife-beating in light of the missionaries' teaching. They also stopped abusing alcohol, gambling, and other vices, such as bringing an end to the practice of concubinage. (See *ibid.* 495.)

¹⁶⁰ Lillias Underwood, 'Report of Medical and Evangelic work by Mrs. H. G. Underwood for 1899', In *Horace G. Underwood Papers II*, edited and translated by Yi Man Yeol and Oak Sung Deuk, (Seoul: 2006), 611.

Underwood notes that: 'I started one at Aogay for which they were most grateful and I have been amply repaid by finding that I was reaching a number of women not reached before.'¹⁶¹ Women who would otherwise have been confined to their homes and weighed down with domestic labours were given an opportunity to come into a public space where they could both express themselves and be connected in a community of women.

The question then arises as to what changes Lillias Underwood herself might have gone through as a result of her mission work for the emancipation of Korean women. It seems that in her teaching and leadership of prayer meetings and Bible studies, her consciousness as a woman developed, sharpening yet further her keenness to work for women's rights and education.

Before travelling to Korea as a medical missionary, Underwood had worked as a nurse in a Chicago hospital, where she appeared an ordinary 'bright young girl of slight and graceful figure.'¹⁶² Although she seems to have had some interest in issues regarding women, poverty and education, and had participated in volunteer activities to help poor women and children even while she was in the Chicago woman's medical college,¹⁶³ it was not until she entered the mission field in Korea that she was exposed to extreme learning experiences and new personal growth. Underwood's missionary work, especially Woman's Work for Woman, seems to have deepened her existing interest in gender issues, especially with regard to women's rights.

Underwood's concern regarding gender issues was manifested not just in her work with Korean women, but also through her interaction with the missionary society in Korea, not least by challenging the stereotyped gender division then prevalent. For example, in 1889, learning of her plan to accompany her new husband on a wedding trip to remote parts of northern Korea, her friends and associates in missionary circles in Korea tried to dissuade her, because: 'No European woman had, as yet, ever travelled in the interior of Korea, and not more than four or five of the male missionaries ever ventured ten miles outside the walls, except to the port.'¹⁶⁴ Indeed, even two years later, when Mr Underwood went with Mr Baird to Pusan to start a new mission station, Baird strongly objected to buying a site three

¹⁶¹ Lillias Underwood, 'Personal Report, September, 1904,' In *Horace G. Underwood Papers III*, edited and translated by Yi Man Yeol and Oak Sung Deuk, (Seoul: 2007), 504-505.

¹⁶² See F.F. Ellinwood, 'Introduction', *Fifteen Years Among the Topknobs*, vi.

¹⁶³ See Elizabeth Underwood, *Challenged Identities: North American Missionaries in Korea, 1884-1934*, trans. Byeon Chang Wook (Seoul, 2013), 35.

¹⁶⁴ Lillias Underwood, *Fifteen Years Among the Topknobs*, 35.

miles away from the nearest settlement owing to security concerns, especially for foreign women, and they ended up taking a site on a hillside close to Pusan.¹⁶⁵ The alleged dangers included wild animals such as tigers and leopards, poor sanitation owing to the difficulty of obtaining water, the possibility of meeting rudeness from mobs made up of local Koreans, and the lack of means of communication to mission headquarters at Seoul.¹⁶⁶ Nevertheless, Lillias Underwood dared to go. As she explained to Dr Ellinwood, the Secretary of the Presbyterian Mission Board:¹⁶⁷

Of course we could take an easier and shorter trip for a mere wedding trip, and have a pleasant time in pretty villages among the mountains, but that would not be the mission trip we have been planning so long. It will be quite worthwhile too for me to demonstrate the fact that women can travel in the country here.

By going ahead with the trip and making it a success, Underwood challenged the prevailing prejudice against women and women's capabilities.

Underwood was also courageous in arguing against the stereotypical norms and expectations of the missionary society, based on an acceptance of traditional gender division, for example the belief that women were more suited to teaching than men, with education understood as an extension of women's domestic role¹⁶⁸ while men, and only men, should preach in public. Even Annie Baird's husband William Baird, who was later to found Soongsil University, had stated upon his arrival in Korea for mission, that: 'I am not sure that I shall choose education work. I should much prefer the simple preaching of the gospel story.'¹⁶⁹

Criticizing this assumption of a separation of roles according to gender, in 1896 Underwood wrote to Dr Ellinwood, Secretary of the American Presbyterian Mission Board, as follows:¹⁷⁰

On the education question, Mr Underwood and I stand alone, and Mr Underwood is rather shaky. They [male missionaries in Korea] won't teach English; they won't teach the higher branches; they don't believe in having a school to attract Koreans so as to save them, though they believe in hospitals for that purpose. The fact is they all want to preach. They think teaching a bore and only fit for us women, while one third of them would make for better teachers than preachers, and some of them will never be fit to preach.

¹⁶⁵ Lillias Underwood, *Underwood of Korea*, 105.

¹⁶⁶ Lillias Underwood, *Fifteen Years Among the Topknobs*, 35.

¹⁶⁷ Lillias Underwood, #14L, Mar. 8, 1889, Lillias Underwood's Letter to Dr. Ellinwood, in *Horace G. Underwood Papers I*, edited and translated by Yi Man Yeol and Oak Sung Deuk, (Seoul: 2005), 510-511.

¹⁶⁸ See Catharine E. Beecher, *Woman's Profession as Mother and Educator*, (Philadelphia: 1872).

¹⁶⁹ Baird Papers, 17 Jan. 1890. William Baird's letter to his brother Richard on his way to Korea. 'William M. Baird Papers' Record Group 173, Philadelphia: The Presbyterian Historical Society. In Elizabeth Underwood, *Challenged Identities: North American Missionaries In Korea, 1884-1934*, 78.

¹⁷⁰ Lillias Underwood, #26L Apr. 22, 1896. Lillias Underwood's Letter to Dr. Ellinwood, In *Horace G. Underwood Papers II*, edited and translated by Yi Man Yeol and Oak Sung Deuk, (Seoul: 2006), 394.

Underwood's critique as to male missionaries' preference for preaching and undervaluing of teaching seems to have been effective to some degree, as we find that some major figures among male missionaries did later become involved in school education. These included the abovementioned William Baird, who founded Soongsil College, and Lillias' husband Horace G. Underwood, who founded Yonsei University, albeit that these men were also involved in preaching.

Underwood also argued for full voting rights for married women within the missionary society, who at that time were allowed to vote only after passing the third year language test. Underwood insisted that married women should be treated in exactly the same way as single women and male missionaries, who gained the right to vote by passing the first year language examination.¹⁷¹ Responding to the rationale for denying the married women votes, that they would simply double the votes of their husbands, Underwood pointed out that the married state does not 'becloud a woman's intellect.'¹⁷²

In fact, Underwood insisted, women missionaries would eagerly engage in studying the Korean language in order to address the urgent needs of Korean womanhood in 'the utter barrenness of her social, intellectual and spiritual existence'.¹⁷³ Challenging the image of confined domestic womanhood, she championed the work of married women missionaries, pointing out that despite the domestic trials of housekeeping and child rearing,¹⁷⁴ they proved successful not only in learning the language, but also in doing much of the same work as single women or even male missionaries. Such determined advocacy for the rights of married women demonstrates her strong women's consciousness.

As shown above, it seems that through her work in mission Underwood did experience personal growth in terms of her interests in gender issues and women's rights. As a female missionary, doctor, and writer, she certainly did not conform to the simple model of wise mother and good wife, albeit that she acknowledged the importance of those roles. Through her leadership in education and evangelization she contributed to raising the status of Korean women and to their emancipation, leading them out from their private *anbang* to the

¹⁷¹ Lillias Underwood, 'Shall Married Women Have a Vote on Mission Matters', *The Korea Mission Field*, 8 (1912), 345.

¹⁷² *Ibid.* 345-6.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.* 346.

public realm of the church.¹⁷⁵ Rejecting the Confucian idea of *naeoebub*, involving with virtual, physical separate spheres based on gender, she sought gradual change and reform, centered around the Christian church.¹⁷⁶ This aspect of Underwood's work had a strong impact on the missionary herself, as she was challenged by the strong devotion evinced by the Korean women, by their perseverance in Christian service and endurance in the face of trial and persecution. It provided Underwood with opportunities to develop her woman's consciousness and sense of female community.

Taken as a whole, Lillias Underwood's missionary efforts to raise the social standing of Korean women appear to have brought changes both to Korean women and to herself. While Korean women gained dignity and self-respect, Underwood grew as a public leader, fulfilling her potential as writer, speaker, and educator, earning social importance well beyond what would normally be associated with the simple domestic ideal of Victorian womanhood.

¹⁷⁵ See Yoon Jeong Ran, 'The Desire of American Women Visiting Choson's "Ahnbang (Women's room)" in the Late 19th Century: Focused on Woman Missionary Lillias Horton Underwood', *Sarim* [The Historical Journal], Vol.34, (2009), 105-134.

¹⁷⁶ Underwood's Woman's Work for Woman centering around the Church may have worked out well, in a sense that the women have found their own space in the churches. See Linda K. Kerber, 'Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman's Place: The Rhetoric of Women's History', *The Journal of American History*, vol.75, No.1, (June 1988), 9-39. Quoting the work of Estelle Freedman, Kerber maintains that: women movement had been 'most successful when they had commanded actual physical space of their own, which they could define and control.' (See Estelle Freedman, 'Separation as strategy: Female Institution Building and American Feminism, 1870-1930, *Feminist Studies*, 5 (Fall, 1979) 512-29, esp.513.); See also Jung Mi Hyeon, *Lillias Horton Underwood* (Seoul, 2015), 177-178.

Conclusion and Outlook

In the encounter between female western missionaries and indigenous women that took place within the project Woman's Work for Woman in late 19th and early 20th century Korea, both groups seem to have achieved emancipation in their own context, overcoming the gender stereotyping and assumptions of domesticity that were at the core of the Victorian and Confucian ideals of womanhood.

Nevertheless, most of the main female missionary literary narratives (those by Annie Baird, Ellasue Wagner, Jean Perry, and Lillias Underwood) do not show alteration on the part of the women missionaries themselves. Furthermore, they seem to overlook the contribution of Korean women in working towards their own emancipation, their active leadership, and their agency in evangelical work.

This thesis has sought to uncover such hidden or overlooked elements, in order to present a more complete picture of the cultural encounter and interaction between female missionaries and Choson Korean women around the late 19th and early 20th century. In doing so it has drawn upon Bhabha's idea of authentic cultural encounter in the third space, which invalidates the hierarchical view of encounter between different cultures.

In order to accomplish its purpose, this thesis has explored the literary narratives of the women missionaries Annie Baird, Ellasue Wagner, Jean Perry, and Lillias Underwood, along with their non-fictional writings, and other contemporary mission-related materials.

Chapter One presented the background to the female missionaries' cultural encounter with Choson Korean Confucian women in the mission work Woman's Work for Woman, which took place in the late 19th and early 20th century. In particular, the chapter explored the historical and theological background, describing the western-centred ideology of 'manifest destiny', an evangelistic ethnology that aimed at conversion of all people, and the mission theology that emphasized the conversion of 'heathen' women. The chapter also described the Protestant Revival Movement across North America and Europe around the late 19th century, and the extensive participation of middle-class Church women in the evangelical foreign mission movement. It was noted that the female missionaries shared a conservative theological background, with an emphasis on the literal interpretation of biblical texts, individual-oriented evangelism, and a pietism that gave little heed to political realities.

In terms of the missionary women's individual biographies, Annie Baird came to Korea in 1891 as the wife of an American Presbyterian missionary, the Reverend William Baird, who later founded the Soongsil College in Pyeng yang. Her mission field was Pusan, Daigu and

then later, from around 1897, Pyeongyang, where she assisted her husband, especially in education and literary work. Ellasue Wagner travelled to Korea in 1904, appointed by the Houston Conference as single female missionary in the American Methodist Episcopal Church, South. Wagner's main mission was education, teaching and directing at girls' schools in Songdo and in Wonsan, in the northern part of Korea. Later on in her mission career she was involved in supervising the women's missionary social institutions in Seoul. Jean Perry also travelled to Korea as a single female missionary, appointed by the Presbyterian Church, Australia in 1891. In 1896 Perry established the British Evangelistic Mission, working with Ellen Pash as an independent missionary. After beginning her mission work in Pusan, Perry was based mainly in Seoul, engaged alongside Pash in mission work for minorities; for example, the two women opened a home for destitute children. Lillias (Horton) Underwood arrived in Korea in 1888, appointed by the American Presbyterian Church as a single female medical missionary, but in 1889 she married the Reverend Horace Grant Underwood, who was to become the founder of Yonsei University in Seoul. Although Underwood's main area of mission was to have been medical, she accompanied her husband on his evangelical trips, and was much involved in the mission of education, especially for women in Korea.

Chapter Two explored the ideals of Victorian and Confucian womanhood, and the comparative status of women in Confucian and Victorian society. From around the 1870s, against the background of the early stages of the women's rights movement and the establishment of colleges and universities for women, women were able to join the western male missionaries in the non-Christian Eastern countries. Among them were Annie Baird, Ellasue Wagner, Jean Perry, and Lillias (Horton) Underwood, who were appointed to the mission field in Korea. The cultural encounter between female missionaries and Choson Korean women in the late 19th and early 20th century was notable particularly because of their shared experiences of domestic womanhood, such as 'separate' spheres based on gender, and the concept of a proper place and role for women at home, while men operated in the public realm. The female missionaries accepted and adopted a central paradigm and ideal of the Christian woman in domesticity, consonant with late Victorian sanctified womanhood and exemplified in the work of Catharine Beecher (1800-1878), who claimed that woman's suffrage was not aligned with the customs of Christian people, and women's mission was not to exercise any political role, but to act entirely within the province of a Christian mother. According to Beecher, the only work outside the home that was suitable for women was in education, which was accepted as an extension of the female role in the

Victorian ideal. Foreign mission activities, and education for female missionaries, were largely understood as part of that extended role of women in domesticity, whereby female missionaries would exert moral influence and promote the ideal through their cultural transfer of western women's domestic responsibilities to non-western societies. In their mission work great emphasis was placed upon service, sacrifice, and devotion, rather than any matters with regard to women's rights.

For Choson Korean women, their domestic womanhood was modelled on an ideal pattern of Confucian womanhood. For them, too, their sphere of activity was confined mainly to the home, while men were active in the public realm. However, while the Victorian Christian ideal of womanhood was primarily based upon and defined by gender, the Confucian Choson womanhood was much more complicated. In addition to gender, factors such as class, age and generation had great importance, impacting the status of Confucian women in different ways. Women of the noble class were clearly in a superior position to men of the lower classes, and older women could maintain positions of authority not just over younger women but also over younger men.

With regard to the separate spheres of home and the world, Confucian Choson differed from Victorian society in that, although the division did exist, there was not always a strict distinction between home as domestic realm and the world as the public realm. Rather, the domestic realm would often be considered as the base to fulfil public duties, as exemplified in *Susin Jega Chiguk Pyeongcheonha*, 修身齊家, 治國平天下, which implies a progression from cultivating oneself, to regulating the household, and eventually ruling over the country and the world. That is, in Confucian Choson Korea, the domestic realm was not considered less important, but was fundamental as the starting point to work in the public realm. For example, the family ritual of ancestor worship at home, attended by all living family members, was important to maintaining family honour, hence may be considered to have had a public or social function. This ritual was prepared by the women of the family, a role that had importance beyond the narrowly domestic. Furthermore, especially for women of the noble class, serving or entertaining guests from the wider society was an important social role.

With regard to the comparative status of women in Confucian and Victorian society, especially after marriage, both western and Confucian women were ultimately subject to their husbands' power. In Victorian society, until the first half of the nineteenth century, a woman's legal status was 'consolidated into that of the husband', as William Blackston noted in his *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (Oxford, 1765-1769), while in Choson

Korea the lives of Confucian women were dictated by *Samjongjido* (三從之道), based on the Confucian gender ideology, which encompassed the feminine duty of obedience to men: when young to her father, when married to her husband, and when widowed to her son.

Yet while both Victorian and Confucian women were subject to their husbands' power, their legal status as married women was not exactly the same. In the Victorian code, there was no legal check on a husband's power, even in the case of domestic abuse. In Confucian Choson, domestic violence was classed as a personal offence, and considered as less serious than other crimes of violence. With regard to divorce, in America and Britain, especially before the 19th century, this was extremely difficult for a woman to obtain, as she would have to prove her husband guilty of 'cruelty, incest, bigamy or bestiality'. In Confucian Choson, divorce was very uncommon among the noble class, as it would often imply the husband's loss of authority through his position as head of the Confucian household. However, among the common classes, marriages were often based on custom, depending on personal assent and not on official documentation. Consequently, for women lower down the social scale, the obstacles to divorce were not so great.

Thus, Chapter Two succeeded in showing that the view of Choson women presented by the women missionary authors, often that of weak and passive victims, incapable of exercising initiative or agency, is somewhat misleading and one-sided, overlooking the rights and protections appreciated by females in Confucian Korea.

Chapter Three of this thesis explored the encounter between female western missionaries and Choson Korean women that took place under the mission framework, Woman's Work for Woman, and looked at how the Choson Korean women were changed upon their conversion to Christianity. To do so, it drew upon the main narratives of Annie Baird, Ellasue Wagner, Jean Perry and Lillias Underwood.

Given that the role of women in both Confucian Choson and western Victorian society was a domestic one, it was natural that the meetings between the female missionaries and the Choson Korean women should take place in a domestic setting. This was indeed the case, with the missionaries making evangelical visits to the homes of Korean girls and women, and those women in turn visiting the missionaries' homes for Bible study or other types of training, visits which also provided the local women with a glimpse into western modern culture and domesticity.

Despite the limits imposed by the gender norms in both western and Confucian society, it appears that in Choson Korea the mission project Woman's Work for Woman was

successful. Korean women who had been converted to Christianity, even at the risk of persecution by their families, often joined in women's prayer gatherings and Bible meetings; they took part in worship and appeared in public spaces, sometimes even making their voices heard, and exercising leadership.

The writings of Annie Baird, Ellasue Wagner, Jean Perry and Lillias Underwood show how the work of female missionaries made a critical contribution to raising the standing of Korean women, not least through their critiques on the degradation of Korean women through child marriage, concubinage, male preference, and lack of education. It appears that Korean women were evangelized and emancipated from the bondage of old Confucian tradition.

The representation of Korean girls and women and of the changes brought about by conversion in the main missionary narratives of Baird, Wagner, Perry, and Underwood, indicates how diverse and dramatic these experiences were. Nevertheless, many of the changes described in the narratives are by no means contrary to the domestic ideal of womanhood, which the western women missionaries actually supported and reinforced by instructing the Korean women in the arts of domestic management after the western model.

In the case of Pobai, the Choson Korean girl portrayed in Baird's *Daybreak in Korea* (1909), she suffers greatly as a result of her conversion, yet is willing to forgive the domestic violence inflicted on her by her husband Mansiki, moving on to build a happy Christian home with him. In Wagner's *Pokjumie* (1911), the eponymous protagonist is the 'small wife' of Mr Chang, falsely accused by Kisaeng and evicted from her household. She too undergoes great suffering, including being sold to the wealthy Na. However, following her encounter with a female missionary and her conversion to Christianity, Pokjumie gains the strength to overcome her difficulties. She is reunited with and forgives Mr Chang, and goes on to create a Christian home with him. Young Mrs Min, portrayed in Perry's *Man in Grey* (1906), also exemplifies domestic womanhood, assisting her husband Mr Min, mainly in obedience. These are typical examples of the domestic ideal of womanhood presented by the female missionaries in their narratives. Occasionally, however, the missionary narratives portray women, often those who have been converted to Christianity, who exhibit remarkable leadership and independence. These converted Korean women characters not only have left behind the shackles of Confucian domesticity, but have also chosen not to embrace the Victorian domestic feminine ideal promoted by the western missionaries. Consequently, they offer a picture of emancipated womanhood, beyond the Confucian and Victorian models. It is possible that the authors did not intend to offer such a picture, but

that they were nevertheless reflecting truthfully what they had observed of Korean women while working in the mission field.

For example, in Baird's *Daybreak in Korea* (1909), Mudang Sim Ssi exercises female leadership. Kisaeng, the skilful 'diplomat' and 'born politician' in Wagner's *Pokjumie* (1911) is another example. We can also point to Martha, mother of Mittome, who bravely sets out on her journey in faith, searching for the missionary educational institution for Bible women. In Wagner's *Kim Subang and Other Stories of Korea* (1909) Kim Su Bang's subservient second wife Mary is transformed after her conversion to Christianity, exhibiting indomitable strength when faced with a group of men intent on carrying her away, and strong leadership when she forms a group of Christians in a non-Christian village. Meanwhile, in Perry's *Man in Grey* (1906), 'Old Korean Woman' exhibits leadership, giving an impromptu public speech at the funeral of the missionary couple's baby daughter and the son of the new believers, Mr and Mrs Min. In Perry's *Uncle Mac the Missionary* (1908), 'Grannie' gives advice to Uncle Mac, the young volunteer American missionary, urging him not to neglect his health, and later comforts Agnes, Mac's fiancée, who has travelled to Korea upon hearing the news of his death in the mission field. In another work by Perry, *Chilgoopie the Glad* (1906), Hulmonie has for spent thirty years as one wife among many, but after her conversion she leads prayers, supporting and leading the work of the mission. Mrs Yu, the conservative and obstinate wife in Underwood's *With Tommy Tompkins* (1905), initially resists the Christian faith against the will of her newly converted husband, but after her conversion becomes a model of devotion, while in the same author's *Fifteen Years Among the Topknots* (1904), the young bride married into a heathen family eventually leads the whole family to conversion. These tales are revealing and bear witness to the existence of some remarkable Korean women, who exercised significant leadership upon their conversion. That these characters reflect historical reality can be seen in the case of 'Hanna', an old Korean woman who, at a revival gathering in the early 1900s, was asked (by a man) to lead a public prayer gathering; and that of another Korean woman, 'Shin busi', who spoke up at a public gathering in Kimwha. These women acted well beyond the norms of Confucian womanhood, but also transcended the limits of Victorian domestic womanhood, in which women were expected to remain within the private sphere of the home. Compared with Perry's female missionary character Miss Smart, who struggled with the restraints imposed by the Victorian gender ideology and was prevented from leading in a mixed gathering, Hanna's leadership is remarkable indeed.

There is more historical evidence that indicates how, in the early years of the Korean mission, conversion led to dramatic changes in the consciousness of Confucian Korean women. For example, Ro Salome was a teacher and class leader in charge of the Wyoming chapel in KangSyo. Although this chapel was originally intended to be mainly for women, the congregation grew quickly from fifteen to sixty-one, of whom around half were Korean men. That they accepted the leadership of a Korean woman is indeed remarkable, since under both the Confucian gender code, and the Victorian ideal of womanhood, it ought to have been unthinkable for a woman to lead and teach men. Yet Ro Salome was not unique, since Sadie Kim in Pyeng Yang underwent a similar transformation upon her conversion.

Chapter Four continues the examination of the changes brought about in Korean women upon their conversion, focusing in particular on their activity as agents. Drawing evidence from the biographies of real Korean women as well as from the female missionaries' narratives, the chapter shows how Choson Korean women broke free of the restraints imposed on them by the gender codes of Confucian and western Victorian society, venturing out into a sphere beyond domesticity. Many Korean women experienced dramatic changes in their social standing after their conversion, such that they achieve a state of emancipated womanhood.

The chapter investigates where the credit for Choson Korean women's independence and strong leadership might lie, looking in turn at three groups, namely western female missionaries, Korean male elites, and Korean women themselves.

The work of the female missionaries certainly went some way towards bringing about this transformation among Korean women. However, given the Victorian framework within which the western women were working, which idealized a domestic form of womanhood, it cannot claim the full credit. In the narratives, we can see this emphasis on domesticity in, for example, Baird's two short stories 'Ko Young Gyu Jeon' and 'Bu Bu ui Mo Bon'. Then, in the non-literary work of the female missionaries, it is striking that the schools they founded for girls and women, such as Ewha founded by Mary F. Scranton, and the Holston Institute in Songdo founded by Wagner, placed a strong emphasis on preparation for domestic life.

Male Korean elites, more specifically the reformers seeking national independence and enlightenment, did emphasize women's education and equality. However, while these movements had some impact on enhancing women's standing in Korea, the fact that their leadership was exclusively male indicates that such effects were limited. Indeed, the writings of Korean reformers of the period, such as Seo Jae Pil and Yun Chi Ho, along with

those of Shin novelists like Yi Injik, Yi Haejo and Choi Chansik, portray women in a limited domestic role or, at best, show women's status as 'transitional'.

Consequently, credit for the emergence of such emancipated Korean womanhood lies ultimately with the Korean women themselves. Looking more closely at the actual situation of those women, we can see that their leading role in managing their household finances, and even in some cases running small businesses, may have prepared them for leadership in evangelical work, the expansion of their social world, and the elevation of their social standing. This enhanced social position is delineated in Perry's work *Uncle Mac the Missionary* in the character of Mrs Whang, who is a successful rice merchant; and in Wagner's *Kumokie*, in which Whang Ssi, the go-between, also enjoys good economic standing. We find more evidence of such elevated status in real Korean Bible women such as Helen Paik, who was appointed to Incheon in 1893; Sadie Kim, who became a Bible woman in 1899, and Dorkas from Puk Chong, who earned money through peddling and trading as she carried out the work of evangelization, visiting from village to village, preaching door to door, evangelizing women, teaching them how to read the scriptures and praying for those who were in need, while also selling Bibles and tracts. In their lives before conversion these women had all exercised financial management, either at home or, in the case of Dorkas the liquor seller, even in a commercial context. These Korean Bible women were also recognized in the female missionaries' narratives. For example, Bobae in Baird's *Ko Young Gyu Jeon* is converted by a woman neighbour, who conveys to her the Christian message,¹ while Perry's Grandmother Shin visits door to door, holds meetings for women, and founds a church in her village.² Underwood writes about the devotion of Korean Bible women such as Mrs Ko of Chan Dari, and Mrs Kim of Sorai, who teach from village to village at their own expense,³ while Wagner recognizes Lois Chun, the Korean Bible woman who preached and taught the gospel whenever Korean women came to visit the missionary house.⁴ The contribution of these women to the evangelical work was significant, and it is notable that their role was not always limited to that of assistant to the

¹ Annie Baird, *Ko Young Gyu Jeon*, 15-16.

² See Perry, *Twenty Years a Korea Missionary*, 50-51.

³ See Lillias Underwood, 'Report of Medical and Evangelical Work by Mrs. H. G. Underwood for 1900', in Yi Man Yeol and Oak Sung Deuk (eds. and trans.) *Horace G. Underwood Papers, II* (Seoul: 2006), 644.

⁴ Wagner, *Korea Calls*, 32.

female missionaries.⁵ They exercised leadership by working independently, especially in the remote regions that remained inaccessible to the western women.

This notable contribution to the evangelical effort appears to have owed a great deal to women's strong economic status throughout the history of Choson, old Korea. Especially in the early period of Choson, it was well expressed in the *Janyeo Gyunbun Sangsokje* (子女均分相續制),⁶ according to which children were to be allowed to inherit their parents' property in equal proportions, regardless of their gender. It seems that the right of Choson women to own and dispose of property, and their responsibility for managing household finances, prepared and helped them to contribute to the evangelical work, not least by strengthening the financial position of the early Korean church, following the Nevius principle of self-support.

Chapter Five of this thesis presented an analysis of the main missionary narratives, paying particular attention to the representations of Korean women and female western missionaries, focusing on and comparing the images of strong Korean Confucian women and of the western female missionary as Victorian lady.

The disparity in wealth and the economic relations between the western women missionaries and the Korean people in general could have been a source of much misunderstanding, especially with regard to the Christian teachings on self-denial, self-sacrifice and renunciation. Nevertheless, the affluence of the women missionaries appears to have been effective in evangelizing Korean women (and men), while also having the unforeseen and undesired effect of turning the Christian faith into a 'prosperity Gospel'.

The section of this chapter on strong Korean women revealed through the character of mudang Sim Ssi the female leadership and power in shamanism in Choson Korea. Sim Ssi's conversion eventually represents the replacement of female power and leadership by male authority, along with a social and institutional realignment from an indigenous Choson society to that of an imported Protestant Christianity, which has its own considerable ramifications for gender discourse.

The chapter also revealed the ambiguities of the position of the female missionaries, in that they worked against the Confucian abasement of women, yet without seeking any

⁵ Sadie Kim's role was not always as an assistant to the missionaries. See 'Sadie Kim' in Mattie Wilcox Noble (ed.), *Victorious Lives of Early Christians in Korea, compiled and written in the Korean language by Mattie Wilcox Noble; translated into the English language by the compiler* (Tokyo, 1933).

⁶ See *Kyeongguk Daijeon* 經國大典, (Kyungsung: Choson chongdokbu Jungchuwon, 1934), Hyungjun 刑典, Sachunjo 私賤條, 491-501.

betterment of their own situation. It went on to show that while promoting equal rights for Korean women who were themselves strong female characters, they failed to consider the change that could be brought about by purely indigenous efforts. Although Korean Confucian women themselves, especially those in the yangban class, such as Yim Yoonjidang and Kang Jungildang, could have been held up as models for equality and women's rights in Choson Korea, the missionary women seem not to have recognized this. Despite characters such as Mrs Kim in Wagner's *Kumokie*, or Mrs Chang in the same author's *Pokjumie*, it appears that the western female missionaries believed that Korean women's emancipation could be brought about only through their own work, and not through indigenous efforts.

Chapter Six explored how each of the missionary authors considered in this thesis, namely Baird, Wagner, Perry and Underwood, were themselves changed through their encounter with Korean women and through their participation in Woman's Work for Woman, especially as regards their work for emancipation. This is an aspect that is often missing from the missionary narratives, as the western women tended to consider themselves as 'giver' rather than 'receiver' or 'co-worker' in the work of emancipation. Yet while the narratives fail to consider the position of the western women in Korea, it nevertheless appears that the missionary project Woman's Work for Woman had an impact not just on the indigenous women it was intended to serve, but also on the situation of the female missionaries themselves. In addition to their personal challenges in the mission field, and the new experiences beyond the Victorian ideal of womanhood, it appears that the missionaries' cultural encounter with Korean women brought about changes in their lives with regard to their Victorian womanhood.

Among the missionary authors considered in this thesis, Annie Baird may well have perceived herself primarily as a wife and mother, in line with the ideal of Victorian womanhood; however, in her mission work and literary activities she certainly did not conform to the traditional model of femininity. She published articles in the *Korea Mission Field*, a prominent missionary publication, in which she argued her own views on voting rights for married women. While she did not support any such right, her willingness to enter into a public debate is evidence that she was not confined by the prevailing norms of Victorian womanhood.

In her evangelical work seeking for the emancipation of Korean women, Baird underwent great change in terms of her cross-cultural understanding, even sharing in a community consciousness with Korean women. In her comments on the dress of Korean mothers, she

demonstrates praiseworthy empathic ability, managing to maintain her own identity as an American while advocating for Korean women on the grounds of their shared experience of motherhood. Her ability to view things from the perspective of Korean women seems to have been extended and strengthened, demonstrated in her sympathy and her deep sense of mutuality in excellence.⁷

From what we know of the early life of Jean Perry, before entering the mission field she did not have a strong woman's consciousness. Indeed, even her decision to become a missionary was based upon the encouragement of a male pastor. However, it seems that through her mission work in Korea she underwent much alteration and personal transformation. For example, she made two fundraising trips to Australia, and with her missionary colleague Ellen Pash she established her own independent mission foundation. Above all, by making a speech at the podium at the great 'mixed' missionary gathering at the Keswick religious convention in England, she took on a role prohibited by the Victorian ideal of womanhood. Indeed, Perry exemplifies the prevailing attitude to women as speakers and leaders in the story of Miss Smart, whose leadership of a mixed gathering in the missionary conference in Korea is questioned and criticized.⁸

Perry was acutely aware of the disparity between her position as a westerner and that of indigenous Korean women and men, noting that, 'between the nations there was to us a great gulf fixed'.⁹ Nevertheless, her relationship with the local Koreans did contribute to her own alteration. This is shown indirectly in a story in which a missionary recognizes his own shortcomings in comparison to a local Korean's simple faith and fortitude,¹⁰ contradicting the assumption that missionaries present good examples of outlook and behaviour guided by religion. Her more positive attitude to the local Korean people can also be seen in the representation of Korean characters such as grandmother Shin,¹¹ showing them as devoted Christians, active in evangelical work.

Lillias Underwood seems to have realized early on the potential of Korean women to be passionate and useful Christian workers. Although many of the Korean women she encountered through her evangelical work holding Bible classes or prayer gatherings had little or no education, Underwood was struck and even challenged by their devotion, strength, and independence. She made particular efforts towards the provision of education

⁷ Baird, *Inside Views of Mission Life* (Philadelphia, 1913), 19.

⁸ See *The Man in Grey*, 108-110.

⁹ Perry, *Chilgoopie*, 132.

¹⁰ See Perry, *Twenty Years a Korea Missionary*.

¹¹ *Ibid.* 51-52.

for Korean women, and recognizing that new solutions were needed outside the traditional school model she introduced alternative education programs such as night schools and seasonal schools for poor girls and young women, and short-term Bible gatherings and prayer meetings for women in the more remote rural areas, thus helping each woman to fulfil her potential in her own context.

Before travelling to Korea as a missionary, Underwood had worked as a nurse in Chicago hospitals. Although she had participated in volunteer work related to poverty and women's rights at home in the United States, it seems that it was only through her experiences in the mission field in Korea, working with and for Korean women, that she was exposed to the realities of those issues. As a result she experienced personal growth and alteration, as revealed in many of her activities in Korea, even with regard to the missionary society. Her pioneering wedding trip to the remote inlands of northern Korea, and her critique on typical gender roles, such as male missionaries' preference for preaching and their disparagement and undervaluing of both teaching and women by designating teaching as a role fit only for women, appears to have enhanced not only her own standing but that of all women. In short, Underwood helped to advance the position of women beyond the Victorian norm of femininity then prevalent in the missionary society in Korea.

Unlike Baird and Underwood, Ellasue Wagner was unmarried. It is therefore perhaps all the more remarkable that she adhered so strongly to the ideal of Victorian domestic womanhood, valuing above all the woman's role as mother and wife in a Christian home. Nevertheless, this did not stop her from promoting economic independence for Korean women, an apparent inconsistency that might have been connected to her own economic standing as a single missionary. In order to address the appalling poverty suffered by some of her Korean pupils and help them to achieve economic independence, as principal of the Holston Institute she introduced classes to train and prepare students to make their own living. Wagner also served as the head of the social evangelical centres for women at Songdo and at Seoul, which provided public spaces for Korean women and girls, allowing them to leave seclusion at home and join in many kinds of educational opportunities and activities.

While Wagner has been the subject of some criticism as to her lack of personal engagement with Korean women,¹² what we learn from her writings indicates that she did form

¹² See Kim SungEun, 'hanmal iljesigi elasuwagnerui hankuk yeosung gyoyookgwa sahoibokjisaeop' [Ellasue Wagner's Korean women education and social wellbeing business in the late Korea in Japanese ruling period], *Hankuk Gidokgyowa Yeoksa* [Korean Christianity and History], Vol.41, (Sept. 2014), 115-152.

relationships with the local people. Both *Pokjumie* (published in 1906) and *Kumokie* (published in 1922) depict relationships between a female missionary and a Korean girl, and while in the former work that relationship is a distant and impersonal one,¹³ in the latter it is much warmer, suggesting friendship rather than authority. This suggests that Wagner's own personal relationships had developed somewhat. Wagner's later works, such as *Korea Calls*, published in 1948, show some personal relationships with Korean women, albeit in a somewhat limited form. For example Wagner writes appreciatively of Lois Chun, describing her as 'friend, adviser, helper, and Bible Woman'.¹⁴ Hence we can deduce that, through her mission work, Wagner did experience change in her relationships with local Korean women. Furthermore, she grew in terms of her own woman's consciousness, developing independent leadership and skills far beyond the norm for the times and cultures in which she lived. Although she appears to have promoted the Victorian notion of domestic womanhood among her pupils, as a strong leader and organizer, as principal of the Holston Institute, and as the head of the social evangelical centres for women at Songdo and at Seoul, Wagner herself was clearly not an 'ideal' woman in Victorian terms. According to Ryu Dal Young, a Korean scholar who worked with her at the Holston Institute, Wagner was 'a giant' among women, who supervised over the institute from its early stage as a cottage school to the great educational establishments in Korea.¹⁵

As has been shown, therefore, the arrival of the Protestant Church in Korea in the late 19th century, and the subsequent cultural encounter between female missionaries and Korean women, led to a process of change on both sides. Each group helped the other to achieve emancipation in their own way and their own cultural context. Both the female missionaries and the Korean Confucian women experienced personal and social change, a process of emancipation that took place under the mission framework, Woman's Work for Woman.

The present study opens up avenues for further research; however, owing to restraints of time and space, these can only be indicated here:

First, future research could focus on the links between the female missionaries' Woman's Work for Woman and women's rights movements in other countries, especially in Eastern Asia. As in Korea, countries such as China and Japan were traditionally influenced by Confucian philosophies and principles, and so far there has been little research into the

¹³ cf. Chapter 11, *Pokjumie*.

¹⁴ Wagner, *Korea Calls*, 27.

¹⁵ See Ryu Dal Young, *My Life Note: Important Meeting* (Seoul: 1998), 106, 109.

activities of women missionaries in these locations, or critical comparison among them. Given that the links or connections appear to have been not always obvious, and not much represented in formal literature, the writings of the female missionaries would be particularly interesting and valuable resources. Moreover, because the narratives and novels were written for and read mainly by women, and deal with questions of womanhood, they will be useful when making comparisons between the Victorian, Christian perspective and the Confucian view.

Second, future research could investigate how Korean women's own participation and action in lifting their social standing, in roles such as that of Bible woman, were linked with the wider Korean society, especially with regard to the movements for modernization and for women's rights in Korea. To date there have been only a few studies, notable among them the work of Lee-Ellen R.R. Strawn,¹⁶ which investigate the link between the Korean Bible women and the later New Woman movement in Korea. Such research could be further linked with the works of early 20th century Korean Christian women leaders, such as Kim Hwallan (Helen Kim),¹⁷ Pak Induk,¹⁸ or Yim Youngshin,¹⁹ and their involvement in women's rights and nationalist movements in Korea.

Third, future research could investigate how the experiences and changes undergone by the female missionaries could have contributed to the women's rights movements in their home societies once they had returned from mission. For example, Ellen Pash, missionary colleague of Jean Perry and a graduate of Girton College, even before her involvement in mission, seems to have maintained a close relationship with Constance Maynard, a friend from her Cambridge University days who went on to found Westfield College for women, and became the first female college president in England.²⁰ Pash was involved in the

¹⁶ See Lee-Ellen R.R. Strawn, 'Korean Bible Women 1888 to 1930: Effecting change for women from the Anbang to the public square' (PhD, Yonsei University, 2011).

¹⁷ As a graduate of Ewha Woman's University (founded by the missionary Mary F. Scranton), in 1931 Kim Hwallan (1899-1970) became the first Korean woman awarded PhD degree from Columbia University in the US. She was also the first Korean woman president at Ewha. See her autobiography, *Geu Bitsokui Jakeun Sangmyung* [The little life in the light] (Seoul, 1965).

¹⁸ As a graduate of Ewha Woman's University, Pak Induk (1896-1980) studied at Columbia University with a master's degree. She then came back to Korea, working as an educator, writer, and social worker. She was known as the 'Korean Nora Kaye', and worked for women's right in Korea. See her autobiography, *September Monkey* (New York, 1954).

¹⁹ Yim Youngshin, also known as Louise Yim (1899-1977), worked as an educator and politician. She was educated in missionary schools in Korea, and completed her studies at Southern California State University in the US. She was the founder of Chungang Women's College, which later became Chungang University. She was also a politician in the first Korean government. See her autobiography, *My Forty Year Fight for Korea* (International Culture Research Center, Chungang University, Seoul, 1951).

²⁰ See *Constance Maynard Papers*, Queen Mary and Westfield College Archives, University of London, Manuscript Diary, November 28, 1875, 141, 144. Pash is mentioned frequently in the diary Maynard kept

Woman's Christian Temperance Union, which in later years was known to have close links to the movement for women's suffrage in America.²¹

Other possible areas for research include the ways in which the missionaries' women's consciousness was activated and its effect on their home societies, especially with regard to the women's rights movement, and the question of whether the input of indigenous eastern women made any difference to progress in western society.

while at college. See also Pamela J. Walker, *Pulling the Devil's Kingdom Down: The Salvation Army in Victorian Britain* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 280. In 1888, while working as a captain in the Salvation Army in France, Pash wrote to Maynard, then the president at Westfield, to arrange the adoption of a six-year-old orphan, Effie, who had been cared for at Pash's Salvation Army orphanage (*ibid.* 149-151).

²¹ See *The San Francisco Call*, 17 May 1895, 7.

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